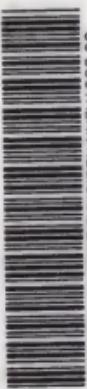


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AGNES C. WIRT,

AND OTHER

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH.



PUBLISHED BY THE
AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY.

150 NASSAU-STREET, NEW YORK.



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AGNES C. WIRT.



—65—

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AGNES C. WIRT.



“This lovely bud, so young and fair,
Called hence by early doom,
Just came to show how sweet a flower
In paradise should bloom.”

Legh Richmond.

AGNES C. WIRT was the youngest daughter of the Hon. William Wirt, and almost the youngest member of a large and happy band of affection-

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ate sisters and brothers. Her peculiarly lovely disposition, and the natural delicacy of her constitution, combined to render her an object of especial love and tender solicitude with all the household. Mr. Wirt took great pains with the education of his children, giving them every advantage which the best instructors, aided by his own personal supervision, could afford; and in their hours of recreation he often joined in their youthful sports, which he possessed the happiest faculty of rendering instructive as well as amusing. His presence was therefore always hailed with eager delight by the youthful group, and their young companions coveted no higher enjoyment than the privilege of spending an evening at his cheerful fireside.

In this happy and well-ordered household the children felt for their parents the highest veneration, mingled with the most ardent and devoted affection; and towards each other that unselfish love which makes us prefer another's happiness before our own, and causes an atmosphere of peace and joy to surround every family circle in which it exists. Under these refining and elevating influences, few could fail to be improved; and certainly they were not lost upon Agnes, whose mind early displayed a wonderful

maturity and power, which made her no less an object of parental admiration than she had ever been of devoted affection. Her face too was extremely interesting, for to the beauty of her delicate features was added the charm of a lovely and intelligent expression of countenance.

Her parents resided during the greater part of her life in the city of Washington, where they mingled with the most refined, polished, and intellectual society. Mr. Wirt's talents and reputation attracted continually a large number of visitors to his house, among whom Agnés was caressed and flattered, being admired for her superior talents, graceful manners, and pleasing appearance. Still she preserved to a remarkable degree her natural modesty and simplicity of character. Grateful to friends who showed her kindness, her heart went forth in perpetual offices of love to those around her, while she remained apparently unconscious of possessing in herself any peculiar charm or attraction. The bright, cheering, animated smile which lighted up her amiable and intelligent face, was like a ray of sunshine to the sad and weary; and her softly spoken words of love were treasured up long after her fair young form had passed out of sight. With her school-fellows and playmates

she was gay and joyous, and full of innocent mirth, her ringing laugh and ready wit ever making their childish sports merrier and brighter.

But though the pleasing qualities of the heart and mind which have been described were well calculated to render her a favorite companion, there was a still higher grace, which beautified every other, and elevated her whole character, without which she could not have produced such strong and abiding impressions, nor so commanded the respect as well as the affection of all who knew her. This was the grace of religion. The kind parent who was so carefully cultivating her mental powers, and seeking to secure her happiness in this life, was yet more earnest in his efforts to bring the heart of his little daughter under the influence of the best and wisest teaching, namely, that of our blessed Saviour and his divine precepts. She was "instructed in the holy Scriptures which make wise unto salvation," through faith in Christ and the renewal of the heart by the Holy Spirit; and in the example of Christian parents, she saw religion in some of its most attractive and pleasing lights. The Holy Spirit was pleased to bless these means of grace, so that at an early age little Agnes gave evidence that her heart was changed, and that

she had become a truly pious child. This was the principle which preserved her purity of heart, and kept her humble and unpretending in the midst of flattery and temptation.

Mr. Kennedy says of her, in his interesting Life of Wirt, "From earliest childhood an object of extraordinary attraction to all who were familiar with Mr. Wirt's household, she possessed a remarkable intelligence and aptitude of mind, which was developed in a devotion to study very unusual to her years and sex. It was not less expressed in her face, which sparkled with physical and intellectual beauty. Her manners won all hearts by their gentleness and grace. The cast of her mind was thoughtful and devoutly religious. These qualities had so planted her in the affections of her family, that she seemed to lead and instruct that little domestic circle of which she was almost the youngest member.

The influence of her Christian character was also felt by all her young associates. Never did her sprightliness and love of amusement lead her to disregard the feelings of the least one among them, or knowingly to violate the rules of her parents and teachers; while the slightest approach to deceit or falsehood was most repulsive

to her. If ever the proposition was made to her by a young friend to seek some forbidden pleasure and conceal it from their parents, it was not easy to forget the look of shocked surprise with which it was instantly rejected, nor the gentle and conciliating tone with which she would afterwards add, a little playfully, as if unwilling to believe the suggestion seriously made, "That would be deceiving our parents, you know ; and I would n't for the world do that, would you ?"

No wonder that each year this dutiful, affectionate, and winning child became more and more endeared to her parents and friends, and that they looked forward with pleased anticipation and the highest hopes to the ripening and maturing of the tenderly cherished plant, so full of beauty and promise. Between her father and herself especially the bond of affection was daily becoming stronger. Congeniality of taste upon literary subjects, as well as many other points of sympathy, mutually attracted towards each other the gifted parent and child. "It is to her influence," says Mr. Wirt's biographer, "we may trace some of the strongest religious impressions of her father while she lived ; and in still greater distinctness the devout contrition and fervid piety which, after her death, became

so engrossing and conspicuous in his character during the remainder of his life. Many beautiful letters addressed by him to this child for several years, attest the estimate he made of her understanding, and his reverence for the purity of her character. From the topics discussed in them, and the grave tenor of the style in many which have fallen under my inspection, the reader of them would never suppose the correspondent to be a little girl scarcely emancipated from the nursery. But the precocity of her mind seems fully to have warranted the tone of these letters. She was her father's constant companion in his study ; arranged and endorsed his papers for him ; collected his books of authority when he was studying his cases ; made notes for him ; and by a thousand affectionate assiduities, so associated herself with his happiest hours, as to render her presence one of his highest delights, and frequent letters to her, when absent, almost indispensable to his content." Kennedy's Life of Wirt.

The same author gives us an extract from a memoir of this beloved daughter, prepared by her father not long after her death.

"Young as she was," says her father, "she seemed to be the seal and connecting bond of

the whole family. Her voice, her smile, her animated, graceful movements, her countless little acts and expressions of kindness and love, those 'small sweet courtesies of life' which she was so continually rendering to all around her, and with such exquisite grace of manner, had made her necessary to every individual member of the household. When she was lost to us, it was as if the keystone of the arch had been removed. There was a healthfulness in the glow of her fresh and young affections, which animated the rigid nerves of age; and a pleasantness and beauty in the play of her innocent thoughts and feelings, which could soothe the brow of care, and light up a smile even on the face of sorrow. To me she was not only the companion of my studies, but the sweetener of my toils. The painter, it is said, relieved his aching eyes by looking on a curtain of green. My mind in its hour of deepest fatigue required no other refreshment than one glance at my beloved child as she sat beside me."

In the month of April, 1829, Mr. Wirt removed to Baltimore; and Agnes' affectionate heart felt keenly the separation which ensued between many dearly loved friends of her early childhood, by whom the loss of her society was deeply de-

plored, and her memory cherished with admiration and affection. In November of the year 1830, her health became increasingly delicate; and before many months elapsed, having scarcely attained her sixteenth year, she was received into the heavenly mansion prepared for her by that Saviour who had so gently drawn her young heart to himself by the cords of his everlasting love.

Her mother says, in a record kept of her illness and death, from which in substance the following facts are taken, "It was about the middle of November that she began to complain of palpitation of the heart, which confined her to the house, and prevented her exercising in any way. She was of course denied the privilege of going to church, which was to her a very hard trial; and as soon as she began somewhat to recover from this distressing affection, she would constantly beg the doctor's permission to go, saying, 'Oh, doctor, if I wrap myself up warm, wear thick shoes, and walk very slowly, can't I go next Sunday, if it is a good day?' And when at last he held out a prospect of her being shortly indulged in her wish, her joy was so great that she could not keep it to herself, but told it to every one. 'The doctor says, in two more

Sundays he hopes I may be able to go to church.’’ With the Psalmist she could say, ‘‘My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.’’ But these thirsting aspirations of her spiritual nature were to be satisfied in no earthly temple, and through no human means. Angels were waiting to welcome her into the upper sanctuary, and to the ‘‘pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.’’

She became extremely ill, her disease assuming another form. ‘‘For the first two days,’’ says her mother, ‘‘the physician pronounced it scarlet-fever; but in this he proved to be mistaken. Upon the two following days she had a violent dysentery. During this time her sufferings were extreme; and the disease not yielding to the remedies administered, I called in another physician, and finally two others; but all in vain. The Lord saw it to be wise and best to refuse her to our prayers. Oh may he enable us to say,

‘‘Thy will, thy holy will be done,
Howe’er it cross our own.’’

From the beginning of her illness, which lasted

only ten days, she appeared to have a persuasion that she should never recover, and exhibited throughout the same lovely characteristics which made her so attractive in health ; proving to all about her the power of that Saviour whom she had chosen as the guide of her youth, to cheer, comfort, and sustain when heart and flesh fail.

With the same love of truth for which she had always been distinguished, she would say of one of her physicians, "I love Dr. B——. I love him because he does not try to deceive me. He tells me that I am very ill."

When told by her friends that her symptoms were thought more favorable, she would reply that she felt herself to be worse ; yet she showed no agitation, but evinced a calm serenity and resignation. An attendant, one day upon handing her a dose of nauseous medicine, asked if she was not tired of taking so much physic. "Yes ; but I must do every thing that the doctor and dear mother wish," she replied, with touching patience.

Feeling at another time a sense of suffocation, owing, as the physician said, to some nervous affection, she called Mrs. W——, a kind friend who was with her, to the bedside, and whispered, "I am dying. Send dear ma out of the

room, if possible ; she will be so distressed ;" showing even at such a moment her characteristic thoughtfulness and consideration for others, as well as a calmness and self-possession truly wonderful, under such circumstances, for a child of her age.

Sometimes well-meaning but mistaken friends would try to cheer and comfort her in the possible prospect of death, by saying that it could have no terrors for her, because she had passed a youth of so much innocence and loveliness, such freedom from sin, such perfect sweetness and goodness as made every body love her, and that God must love her too. But to such remarks she would reply with gentle and heartfelt humility, " You don't know me; you do not know my secret heart ; but God knows all my secret sins, my lukewarmness, my coldness ; and if he saves me," raising her eyes to heaven with an expression of mingled humility, hope, and love, " it is for Christ's sake, for his own mercy's sake, and not for my merits. Oh no. He knows that I am very sinful and unworthy." Upon one occasion after such a conversation, thinking herself alone, she clasped her delicate hands and murmured the following prayer :

" O God, I know that I have been very sinful ;

but thou hast said in thy Holy Bible that unto whom much is forgiven, that one shall love thee much. Thou seest my heart; thou knowest how I love thee. If thou sparest me now, I will serve thee and be thine on earth. If thou takest me away, I will love thee and glorify thee in heaven." Her mother, who was standing by her bedside, remarked, "That is a sweet prayer, my beloved child." She, sighing, answered in a low voice, "I did not know that any one was listening to me."

At another time, when alone with one of her sisters, whom she playfully designated by the title of her "preacher," she several times requested her to kneel and pray for her, saying, "I can pray in my heart, but I feel too weak to pray long. I want you to read the Bible to me also, dear sister, for I cannot read it myself." Her sufferings soon became too violent to admit of sufficient composure to listen to reading at this time."

Two days before her death she fell into a short slumber, and upon awaking asked the doctor what day of the month it was. When he answered, "The twenty-eighth," she said, "I am so glad, for I thought in my dream just now that I read these words: 'Departed this life, on the

twenty-second of December, after a short but severe illness, Agnes Cabell Wirt ; but," with a faint smile to her mother, who stood near the bed, she added, "the day is passed by." She then asked, "Did you hear any music just now?" and being answered in the negative, said, "I never heard such sweet, such heavenly music in my life as I heard in my sleep just now."

Her pastor, the Rev. Dr. Nevins, visited her upon the same day, carrying with him a volume of the "Village Hymns," not knowing that she had a copy of her own. "He drew her attention to one which had long been a favorite with her," says her mother, "and after he left, I requested her sister Catharine to read it to her, which she did on her knees. It was that beautiful hymn,

"Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to thy bosom fly."

Agnes kept her eyes, which beamed with supernatural brilliancy and dovelike softness, fixed as if upon Him whom this hymn supplicates, moving her lips in broken exclamations of love and faith, and sometimes repeating words of the hymn. She retained the same expression for some moments after the reading ceased, and then exclaimed, 'What a sweet, sweet hymn :

“‘Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to thy bosom fly.’

Several other hymns were then read to her by her sister, to all of which she listened with attentive pleasure, particularly when they spoke of God’s tender love and support to those who put their trust in him. ‘Yes, O yes, he will never leave me, nor forsake me ;’ and other similar exclamations fell from her dear lips.”

After her sister had offered a prayer for her, the doctor advised that she should be left in undisturbed quiet ; but she presently sent again for Catharine, her “preacher,” and said, “If you will lie down by me and hold my hand, I will try to sleep.” By this time her hands had become deadly cold, and never afterwards recovered, even for a moment, the least sensible heat. Her sister, kissing her, took her hand between hers, and said, “Oh, my dear sister, if God raises you up from this sickness, we shall be so happy together, praising him, reading the Bible, and praying together.”

“Oh yes,” she replied, “if he does spare me, I will try to live entirely to his glory. Oh, I will live a more Christian life than I have ever done before. But,” after a slight pause, “I know I shall never recover from this sickness.

I hope you pray for me, my dear sister, and that all my dear brothers and sisters pray for me. I pray as much as I can ; but I am so very sick that I cannot pray *constantly*, as I wish."

"After a consultation of the four physicians on the day preceding her death," continues her mother, "she called me to her, and said, 'Dear ma, do the doctors think I am going ?' I replied, 'My sweet child, the doctors all assure me that if your time has nearly come, it is not *very* near, for you must be a great deal weaker first.' She made no reply, but merely closed her eyes in calm resignation. I added, 'My child, Mr. Nevins assures me that if you were to die this moment, he thinks you have an interest in Christ, and are prepared for heaven.' She answered, 'He does not know my secret sins ; he does not see my heart.'"

During the illness of little Agnes, Mr. Wirt was absent from home, engaged in important professional business, from which he was summoned to attend the dying-bed of his beloved child, and arrived only the night before her death. But one interview was permitted them, which by the direction of the physicians lasted only a few moments. "During this," writes her mother, "she spoke to him with her wonted

playful and endearing manner. Upon his leaving the room, she turned to our neighbor, who was sitting by her, and sighing deeply, said, 'I shall never see him again.' 'Oh yes, my dear, you will, if you wish it,' said Mrs. W——. 'I shall never be able to bear another interview,' she replied. And truly she never saw him again, for we were all so anxious to avoid any thing which might disturb the quiet deemed necessary for her, that her father was not allowed to see her again until she was past all hope, and in the insensibility of death."

About candlelight on the evening of her death, she awoke from a disturbed slumber in a delirium, asked to have her new wrapper put on, and her clothes all smoothed down nicely, that she might be ready to receive her father, insisting that she was as well as she ever was in her life, and that she wished to be nicely dressed to see her dear father. The delirium continued, with occasional intermissions, until her spirit took its flight.

Dr. B——, who had been called in only the day before her death, and had no previous knowledge of her character, was selected to stay with her during the night, the family physician being obliged to leave on account of his own uncom-

fortable feelings portending illness. Dr. B—— remarked that he had never attended so interesting and lovely a death-bed. The grateful affection and the sweet tenderness of her manner were irresistibly winning ; while the purity and beauty of her sentiments, uttered even in delirium, was more touchingly lovely than any thing he had ever heard.

During the night she often expressed herself in French ; at other times she recited passages of poetry with the most touching pathos, occasionally raising her voice and speaking with energy, and again whispering in melodious murmurs, when he could only observe from the regular cadence of her voice, and the chiming of the rhythm, that she was repeating poetry. He inquired of her sisters if she ever composed in rhyme, for that a great deal which she uttered was new to him, and not to be found in any of the standard poets. Her manuscripts show that she did sometimes indulge in this style of writing.

During her delirium, she at one time seemed strongly possessed with the idea that she was at sea in a boat. She begged that the boat might not be too much crowded, and that the little children whom she imagined to be with her

might be well taken care of. She would say, "Light the lamp, and call the little children." And as one of the servants passed through the room, she asked, "Is John's father afraid to trust himself in the little boat? I am not afraid to trust myself," murmuring something about Jesus being on the other shore waiting to receive her.

Her mother, who had been exhausted by continued watching night and day, was persuaded to lie down for a few hours, leaving her in the care of the physician and Mrs. C——, a kind neighbor, her sisters stealing occasionally into the room; but they too were advised to lie down, as perfect quiet was desirable, and hope had not been abandoned. Elizabeth alone remained, but was engaged a great part of the time in another room, preparing nourishment and drink for her by the doctor's direction. She often called for her dear father and mother. At length Mrs. C—— asked if she should send for them. "Not now," she answered. Ever considerate for others, she would not have them disturbed even then.

Sometimes she fancied the doctor and Mrs. C—— to be her father and mother, and would exclaim, "Dear father; dear, dear father and

mother, I love you so much." Suddenly, about the middle of the night, there was a great change for the worse. Her parents were then called, but she was not conscious of their presence, and soon calmly slept in the bosom of her Saviour.

Thus closes the record kept by a tender mother's hand, and preserved for many years by an aged saint, one of Agnes' most valued Christian friends, whom she loved with almost a daughter's affection, and by whom the memory of her sweet childhood with all its hallowed influences was fondly cherished until the day of her own death, which occurred only a short time since.

The following account is given by the Rev. Dr. Nevins, her pastor, of his interviews with Agnes during her last illness.

"It was not until the Monday afternoon previous to the death of Agnes, that I was informed of her illness. I immediately hastened to see her, and had some conversation with her, chiefly with regard to the plan and way of salvation, and with particular reference to its infinite fulness and entire freeness. After I had prayed with her, and when about to retire, she exacted of me a promise that I would come again the

next morning. I accordingly visited her about nine o'clock. When I entered the room, she said in her sweet smiling manner, 'Oh, I am so glad to see you; I have been wanting to see you; I have been looking for you since six o'clock.' I again sat by her, and conversed and prayed with her; but I do not now recollect the particulars of what was said on either side.

"I saw her again for a few moments on Wednesday morning; but it was upon the afternoon of that day that I had the conversation with her upon which I look back with most pleasure. I felt a painful anxiety as I approached her bed, for I had heard from an attending friend that she had some hours before seemed much alarmed at the prospect of death; but I was soon relieved. Never have I seen so interesting and lovely a human countenance as she exhibited on this occasion. It was not the rose and the lily mingled as in health; it was the loveliness of the lily alone, that lowly flower of the valley, that covered all the aspect, except that from the midst of it looked forth an eye bright beyond all its former lustre. I never saw so much expression in a human face. I did not suppose that any organization of matter could express so much mind; and yet the expres-

sion was not purely of intelligence, but of love and intellect beautifully blended.

"I wish that I could remember *all* that passed in the interview. I did not know that it was to be our last conversation, though it was just what I could have wished the last to be. I asked if, provided it was God's will to take her then, she was willing to go. She answered without hesitation, and with an expression the farthest removed from anguish, that she was willing. She gave afterwards some reasons why she was willing to go, and they were such as became a Christian. If she continued longer on earth, she would but sin more. This was the idea, though not the very language. I told her she must tell her parents and friends not to grieve inordinately for her, should she be removed from them. She signified that she would, and turning to me, said, her sweetest smile accompanying her words, 'Wont you comfort them?'

"She expressed, in the most distinct manner, and in the most decided terms, her sole reliance for salvation on the atoning blood of Christ ; and several times said with much apparent affection, 'I do love Jesus ; yes, *I do* love him. He loved me, and gave himself for me.' When any thing was said to her by others which seemed to im-

ply that she had something in herself that she might safely rely on, as that she had always been a good girl, she disclaimed all such dependence. 'Ah,' she would say, 'you don't know me.' She manifestly felt that she needed a Saviour; and if she needed one, who does not? She said to me, 'Do you think that I have experienced a change of heart?' I replied that if she could sincerely say, as she had just said, that she loved Jesus, she must have experienced that change. I asked her then, if she thought she had experienced a change of heart. She said in answer, 'Sometimes I do think I have; but at other times I am so lukewarm that I doubt it.'

"I think I clearly discerned in her the working of the Spirit of God. She had such a conviction of sin, and such a deep sense of personal unworthiness, as could not have been derived from any other source. Christ was evidently her hope and her dependence. And not only then did she show this, but a long time before she had manifested that she loved what the Christian loves, and hated what he hates. My soul reposes therefore in the sweet confidence that to her to die was gain, and that she is now where she will ever be—with Jesus; in a place

she would not leave even for her own loved home, and among those who love her far better than even they did whom she has left behind her. She has lost nothing; she has gained every thing."

So in the fair, bright morning of her young life was this happy, highly favored Christian child suffered to enter upon the full fruition of those blessed hopes and cheering promises, by whose attractive light the alluring joys of earth had been stripped of their delusive brightness. The gifts of intellect, beauty, and high social position, together with the deepest and purest source of earthly happiness, kindred love, were all alike insufficient to awaken one sigh of regret when but the foreshadowing of the "glory to be revealed" was presented to her spiritual eye. "The King in his beauty" stood beckoning her to join the white apparelled train who "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." No wonder that there was no look of withdrawal upon her face, who, having gladly performed her earthly mission, "walking humbly with her God," now felt the throbings of her new immortal nature, and the nameless bliss of entering into the presence of Him whom her soul loved.

Her earthly work, however, was not yet *all* ended, for as the young bud, which, though gathered in its first fresh beauty, with its soft, tender leaves still folded upon its half hidden treasures, may leave a lingering fragrance in the air ; and the “dying fall” of music waked by a master’s hand, may return again and again in melodious echoes to the ravished ear ; so in the hearts of those who loved her, lived the memory of little Agnes’ Christian graces ; her holy life and happy death continuing to instruct, attract, and encourage, long after her voice ceased to be heard in the land of the living.

Her father in a letter to her mother thus touchingly describes the sweet impression produced upon himself by her removal :

“My sweet angel visits me, by faith, many times in the course of the day and night. I want only my blessed Saviour’s assurance of pardon and acceptance to be at peace. I wish to find no rest short of rest in him.”

“Dearest heart, let us both look up to that heaven where our angel is, and from which she is still permitted to observe us with interest—up to that heaven where our Saviour dwells, and from which he is showing us the attractive face of our blessed and happy child, and bidding

us prepare to come to her, since she can no more visibly come to us.

"I have no taste now for worldly business ; I go to it reluctantly. I would keep company only with my Saviour and his holy book. I dread the world—the strife, and contention, and emulation of the bar. Yet I will do my duty ; this is part of my religion."

Again, in the following letter to a friend, he expresses the bitterness of his anguish at her loss, with the same earnest Christian desire to learn the heaven-appointed lesson of submissive resignation, and a more entire surrender of his heart to God.

To Judge Carr.

"BALTIMORE, March 23, 1831.

"I owe you several letters, my dear friend, but you are kind, and can allow for my situation. I have had such a winter as I never had before—heavy causes to argue, with a broken heart and exhausted strength, when at every step I felt far more disposed to lie down in the grave. It was not in such a frame that I could address you. Even now I am unfit to write, for to me the heavens are hung with mourning and the earth covered with darkness. The charm of life is gone. I look at my beloved

wife and my still remaining circle of affectionate children, and my heart reproaches me with ingratitude to heaven. I have been too blessed for my deserts. *The selection of the victim is too striking to be misunderstood.* There is a better world, of which I have thought too little. To that world she is gone, and thither my affections have followed her. This was heaven's design. I see and feel it as distinctly as if an angel had revealed it. I often imagine that I can see her beckoning me to the happy world to which she has gone. She was my companion—my office companion, my librarian, my clerk. My papers now bear her endorsement. She pursued her studies in my office, by my side ; sat with me, walked with me ; was my inexpressibly sweet and inseparable companion ; never left me but to go and sit with her mother. We knew all her intelligence, all her pure and delicate sensibility, the quickness and power of her perceptions, her seraphic love. She was all love, and loved all God's creation, even the animals, trees, and plants. She loved her God and Saviour with an angel's love, and died like a saint." Kennedy's Life of Wirt.

"From this period," says Mr. Kennedy, "we date a very notable change in the aspect of Mr.

Wirt's life. He lost, never entirely to recover it, that buoyancy of spirit which heretofore, even in his gravest moments, was wont to break forth in irrepressible sallies. This sad event affected his health, and secretly preyed upon his mind, to a degree which is supposed to have hastened the termination of his life. That religious reverence which had long been a sentiment of his heart, now grew into a pervading and almost engrossing passion. It chastened his ambition, sobered his views of temporal life, and led to the abandonment of schemes and fancies which for a long time had formed the staple of his hopes in the pursuit of his profession. He became more than ever a student in spiritual knowledge, and a most devout and assiduous Christian. I find among papers belonging to this stage of his history much pious meditation and religious discourse, preserved in essays and other writings, which seem to have occupied a large share of his time. Age advanced rapidly, making its strong marks upon his frame, but not subduing or even diminishing the ardor of his industry, or blunting the edge of his faculties. It made him wiser and better, without abating the strength of his judgment or intellect. Occasionally we may find his former playfulness

revived, but we cannot help seeing in it how much it was tempered and abbreviated by the ever-returning memory of his affliction."

May the youthful readers of this imperfect sketch of little Agnes Wirt remember what it was which gave such an irresistible charm to her character in health, enabled her to be so patient and uncomplaining throughout her sickness, and in the hour of death to relinquish without repining the brightest earthly prospects and the most tenderly beloved relatives and friends. Following her example, may many of them be embraced within the fold of that "good Shepherd" who leads all his trusting lambs to the same "still waters" of comfort, and to the same "green pastures" of hope. And like her, having kindled their lamps at the great Source and Fountain of light and love, may they finally be placed amid those "stars" in the firmament of heaven which shall continue to shine throughout eternity in ever-increasing lustre with the reflected beams of the Sun of righteousness.

AGNES' FAVORITE HYMN.

Jesus, lover of my soul,
 Let me to thy bosom fly,
While the billows near me roll,
 While the tempest still is high :
Hide me, O my Saviour, hide,
 Till the storm of life is past ;
Safe into the haven guide ;
 O receive my soul at last.

Other refuge have I none,
 Hangs my helpless soul on thee ;
Leave, ah, leave me not alone ;
 Still support and comfort me.
All my trust on thee is stayed ;
 All my help from thee I bring ;
Cover my defenceless head
 With the shadow of thy wing.

Thou, O Christ, art all I want ;
 More than all in thee I find ;
Raise the fallen, cheer the faint,
 Heal the sick, and lead the blind.
Just and holy is thy name ;
 I am all unrighteousness :
Vile and full of sin I am ;
 Thou art full of truth and grace.

ANOTHER LILY GATHERED;

OR,

CONVERSION OF JAMES LAING.

BY REV. ROBERT M. M'CHEYNE.

ABRIDGED.



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PUBLISHED BY THE
AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY.

150 NASSAU-STREET, NEW YORK.



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“My beloved is gone down into his garden to gather lilies.” Sol. Song 6:2.

In this little narrative we would raise up a humble stone to the memory of a dear boy who now sleeps in Jesus, and to the praise of that

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God and Saviour who planted, watered, and gathered his own lily.

James Laing was born on the 28th of July, 1828, and lost his mother before he was eight years old. He was seized with the same fever as that of which his mother died, and he never was in good health afterwards. He was naturally a very quiet and reserved boy—not so rough in his language as many of the boys around. One day, when he was lying on his dying bed, I was asking his sister what kind of boy he had been. She said that he was as wicked as other boys, only he did not swear. After I was gone, he told his sister that she was wrong. He never used to swear at home, because he was afraid he would be punished for it; but when among his companions he often used to swear. "Ah," added he, "it is a wonder God did not send me to hell when I was a swearer." Another day, hearing some boys swearing near his window, he said, "It is a wonder God did not leave me to swear among these boys yet." Such was the early life of this boy. He did not know the God who guided him, and in whose hand his breath was: and such is the life of most of our children; they "cast off fear, and restrain prayer before God."

The Holy Spirit strives even with children ; and when they grieve him, and resist his awaking hand, he suffers long with them. The autumn of 1839 was a solemn time in this place. The divine ladder was set down in the midst of our Bethel, and its top reached up to heaven ; and even strangers were forced to say, "Surely God is in this place." O that these sweet days would come back again. James' elder brother Alexander, a sailor-boy, was at that time awakened, and the same glorious Spirit seemed to visit James for a time. One evening their sister Margaret, returning home from a meeting, found her two brothers on their knees earnestly crying for mercy. She did not interrupt them, but Alexander afterwards said to her, "Jamie feels that he needs Christ too. We will easily know if he be in earnest, for then he will not need to be bidden to pray." The test was a trying one ; James soon gave up secret prayer, and proved that his goodness was like a morning cloud and the early dew which goeth away. This is the mark of the hypocrite laid down by Job : "Will he always call upon God?" Job 27 : 10.

Another night Margaret observed James coming from the prayer-meeting in the school in

great distress. He kept close by the wall of the church, that he might escape observation. He was much concerned that night, and after retiring to rest, said to his sister in his own Scottish dialect, "There's me come awa' *without Christ* to-night again."

One Thursday evening he attended the weekly meeting held in the church. The passage explained was Romans 4:4-6, and sinners were urged to receive the "righteousness without works." Many were deeply affected, and would not go away even after the blessing. James was one of those who remained, and when I came to him he was weeping bitterly. I asked him if he cared for his soul. He said, "Whiles," that is, sometimes. I asked if he prayed. He said, "Yes." He was much concerned on his return home that night both for others and for his own soul. But these dew-drops were soon dried up again.

He attended the Sabbath-school in the lane where their cottage stands. Often when the teacher was reading the Bible, or some awakening anecdote, the tears flowed down his cheeks; but he tried to conceal his emotion from the other boys, lest they should laugh at him. He afterwards said, in his last illness, "Oh that I

had just another night of the Sabbath-school. I would not care though they should laugh at me now." Sometimes during the reading and prayer in the family, the word of God was like a fire to him, so that he could not bear it ; and after it was over he would run to his wild companions, in order to drown the cries of his awakened conscience.

In July, 1841, he went up to Glammis for his health. I was preaching in the neighborhood, and he wished much to go and hear, but was not able to walk the distance. One night he heard Mr. Cormick preach in a cottage on John 7:37. He felt it deeply, and wept bitterly, but he remarked that none of the people wept. He knew well when people showed any concern for their soul ; and he often remarked that to be anxious is not to be, "*in Christ.*" When he came home, he spoke much of the carelessness of the people where he had been. "Ah, Margaret, there was no Bible read yonder. The people a' went to their bed just as if there had not been a God." What a faithful picture is this of the state of many of our country parishes.

The day of Immanuel's power, and the time of love, was however near at hand. As the cold winds of October set in, his sickly frame was

much affected ; he became weak and breathless. One Tuesday in the end of October, he turned decidedly worse, and became intensely anxious about the salvation of his soul. His lamentable cry was, "O Jesus, save me, save me !" Margaret asked if his concern was real, for he had often deceived her hopes before. He wept, and said, "Yes." His body was greatly pained, but he forgot all in the intense anxiety for his precious never-dying soul. On the Saturday I paid a visit to their humble cottage, and found the little sufferer sitting by the fire. He began to weep bitterly while I spoke to him of Jesus having come into the world "*to save sinners.*" I was enabled in a simple manner to answer the objections that sinners make to an immediate closing with Christ. Margaret wondered ; for I could not have spoken more aptly to the case of her brother if I had known it ; and she inwardly thanked God, for she saw that he was directing it. James spent the rest of the day on his knees in evident distress of soul. Oh how little the most of those called Christians know what it is to pass through such deep waters. Margaret asked him if he was seeking Jesus. He said, "Yes." She asked if he would like any thing—a bit of bread. He said, "No ; but

I would take a bit of the bread of life if you would give it me." She replied, "I cannot give you that; but if you seek it, you will get it." He remained alone till evening, and was never off his knees. Towards night he came to the other end of the cottage, and put this question: "Have I only to believe that Jesus died for sinners; is that all?" He was told, "Yes." "Well, I believe that Jesus died for me, for I am a poor hell-deserving sinner. I have been praying all this afternoon, that as Jesus shed his blood for sinners, he would sprinkle some of it upon me, and *he did it.*" He then turned to Romans 5:8, and read these words: "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." His sister wept for joy, and James added, "I am not afraid to die now, for Jesus has died for me." Often after this he bade his sister read to him Romans 5, and Psalms 103, 116. These were favorite portions with him.

From that day it was a pleasant duty indeed to visit the cottage of this youthful believer. Many a happy hour have I spent beneath that humble roof. Instead of dropping passing remarks, I used generally to explain a passage of the Bible, that he might grow in knowledge. I fear that, in general, we are not sufficiently care-

ful in *regularly instructing* the sick and dying. A pious expression and a fervent prayer are not enough to feed the soul that is passing through the dark valley. Surely if sound and spiritual nourishment is needed by the soul at any time, it is in such an hour, when Satan uses all his arts to disturb and destroy.

One Thursday afternoon I spoke to him on Matt. 23:37, "How often would I have gathered your children." He was in great darkness that day, and weeping bitterly, said, "I fear I have never been gathered to Christ; but if I have never been gathered, O that I were gathered to Christ *now*." After I was gone, he said, "It would give me no peace, though the minister and every body said I was a Christian, if I had not *the sense* of it between God and myself."

He was very fond of the Song of Solomon, and many parts of it were expounded to him. One day I spoke on Song 5:13, "His lips are like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh" I told him that these were some of the drops that fell from the lips of Jesus: "If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink." "I came to seek and to save that which was lost." "Wilt thou be made whole?" "I give unto them eternal life." He said solemnly, "That's fine."

Another day, "I am black, but comely," Song 1 : 5, was explained. He said, "I am black even as hell in myself, but I'm all fair in Jesus." This was ever after a common expression of his. Another day I spoke on Song 5 : 15, "His legs are like pillars of marble set upon sockets of fine gold;" and showed the almighty strength of the Lord Jesus. The next day, when I came in I asked him how he was; but without answering my question, he said, "I am glad you told me that about Jesus' legs being like pillars of marble, for now I see that he is able to carry me and all my sins."

On one occasion, he said, "I am glad this Psalm is in the Bible." "What Psalm?" He answered, "'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death.' God has promised to be with me; and He is as good as his word."

At another time I read to him Isaiah 43 : 2, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee;" and explained that when he came to the deep, deep waters, the Lord Jesus would put his foot down beside his, and wade with him. This often comforted him, for he believed it as firmly as if he had seen the pierced foot of Jesus placed beside his own; and he said

to Margaret, "If Christ put down his foot beside mine, then I have nothing to fear."

One Sabbath I had been preaching on Caleb following the Lord fully, Num. 14:24, and had suggested that every sin committed after conversion might take away something from the believer's weight of eternal glory. Alexander, his brother, was present, it being his only Sabbath on shore. He was much troubled, and said, "Ah, I fear mine will be all lost." He repeated the statement to James, who was also troubled. Alexander said, "You don't need to be troubled, Jamie; you are holy." James wept, and said, "I wonder to hear you speak." Alexander said, "Ah, but you are holier than me."

In the same sermon I had said that if believers did nothing for Christ, they would get in at the door of heaven, but nothing more. The sailor-boy told this to his brother, who wept again, saying, "I have done nothing for Christ." Alexander said he had done less. James added, "I would like to be *near* Jesus. I could not be happy unless I was near him." Speaking of those who had gone to glory long ago, James said that "those who died in Christ now, and did most for him, Jesus would take them *in by*,"

that is, near to himself, "though they were late of coming."

How lovely this simple domestic scene. Happy families, but ah, how few, where the children fear the Lord, and speak often one to another. Surely the Lord stands hearkening nigh, and he will write their words in his book of remembrance. "And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels."

Some of my dear brethren in the ministry visited this little boy, to see God's wonderful works in him, and to be helpers of his joy. Mr. Cumming visiting him one day, asked if he suffered much pain.

JAMES. Sometimes.

MR. C. When you are in much pain, can you think on the sufferings of the Lord Jesus?

JAMES. When I see what Jesus suffered for me, it takes away my pain. Mine is nothing to what he suffered.

He often repeated these words, "My light affliction, which is but for a moment."

At another time Mr. Miller called with me, and our little sufferer spoke very sweetly on eternal things.

MR. M. Would you like to get better?

JAMES. I would like the will of God.

MR. M. But if you were getting better, would you just live as you did before?

JAMES. If God did not give me grace I would. I never met with any boy who had so clear a discovery of the way of pardon and acceptance through the doing and dying of the Lord Jesus laid to our account. He once said to his sister, "Margaret, I have been thinking of a sweet verse to-day: 'The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake.' Isa. 42: 21. It's no for my righteousness' sake, but for *Christ's* righteousness' sake."

Mr. Bonar often visited him, and these were sweet visits to little James. One day when Mr. Bonar had been explaining some scripture to him, he said, "Do you *know* what I am saying, Jamie?"

JAMES. Yes, but I canna get at it, (that is, I cannot feel its power;) I see it all.

MR. B. I think there would be a pleasure in seeing the people drink when Moses struck the rock, even though one did not get a drink himself.

JAMES. Ah, but I would like a drink.

One of the loveliest features in the character of this little boy was his intense love to the souls of men. He often spoke with me on the folly of men living without Christ in the world.

I shall never forget the compassionate glance of his clear blue eye as he said, "What a pity it is that they do not all come to Christ ; they would be sae happy." He often reminded me of the verse, "Love is of God ; and every one that loveth is born of God." 1 John 4 : 7.

One Sabbath evening I spoke to the scholars in the Sabbath-school about him. When the school was over, they all came into his cottage to see him. The little throng stood silent around his bed, while he spoke to them with great solemnity. "You all know what I was ; but the Holy Spirit opened my eyes, and I saw that I was on the very brink of hell. Then I cried to Jesus to save me, and give me a new heart ; I put my finger on the promise, and would not come away without it ; and he gave me a new heart ; and he is as willing to give you all a new heart. I have sinned with you ; now I would like you to come to Christ with me. You would be far happier in Christ than you are now. There are sweeter pleasures in Christ. Here are two awful verses to me :

"There is a dreadful hell,
And everlasting pains ;
There sinners must with devils dwell
In darkness, fire, and chains.

“‘Can such a wretch as I
Escape this cursed end?
And may I hope, whene’er I die,
I shall to heaven ascend?’”

Then pointing to the fire, he said, “You could not keep your finger long there; but remember, hell is *a ‘lake of fire.’* I will give you all a prayer to pray to-night. Go and tell Jesus that you are poor, lost, hell-deserving sinners, and beg him to give you a new heart. Mind,” remember, “he’s willing; and O, be earnest; ye’ll no get it unless ye be earnest.”

These were nearly his very words. His companions were impressed for a time, but it soon wore away. Several Sabbath evenings the same scene was renewed. The substance of all his warnings was, “Come to Christ and get a new heart.” He often told me afterwards that he had been inviting them to Christ, “but *they’ll no come.*”

One evening during the week a number of the children came in. After speaking to them in a very solemn manner, he took from under his pillow a little book, called, “A Letter about Jesus Christ.” He turned to the part where it tells of six boys laying their finger on the promise, Ezek. 36:26, and pleading for its fulfilment.

He was not able to read it to them, but he said he would give it to them ; and each boy should keep it two days, and read it, and *do the same*. The boys were much impressed, and agreed to the proposal.

One day during his illness his sister found him crying very bitterly. She asked him what ailed him. He said, "Do you remember when I was at the day-school at the time of the revival? One day when we were writing our copies, one of the boys had been anxious about his soul. He wrote a line to me on a slip of paper, 'Ezek. 36 : 26. To James Laing. Pray over it.' I took the paper, read it, and tore it, and threw it on the floor, and laughed at the boy. Oh, Margaret, if I hadn't laughed at him, maybe he would have sought Christ until he had *found* him. Maybe I have been the means of ruining his soul to all eternity." In how touching a manner this shows the tenderness of his care for the souls of others ; and also how a rash word or deed, little thought of at the time, may plant a sting in the dying pillow.

One night I went with my little cousin to see James. I said, "I have brought my Jamie to see you." He took him kindly by the hand, and said, "We're twa Jamies thegither. May

we both meet in heaven. Be earnest to get Christ. You'll no get Christ unless you are earnest." When we were gone, he said to his sister, "Although Jamie bides with the minister, unless the Spirit open his eyes, he canna get Christ."

His knowledge of the peculiar doctrines of the gospel was very wonderful. It was not mere head knowledge ; it came fresh and clear from the heart, like spring water welling up from a great depth. He felt the *sovereignty of God* very deeply. Once I quoted to him the hymn,

"Chosen not for good in me."

He said, "I am sure it was for naething in me. I am a hell-deserving sinner." Often, when speaking of the great things God had done for their family, he would say, "Ah, Margaret, I wonder that Christ would look in here and take us." - Once he said, "I wonder how Jesus died for such a sinner as me. Why me, Lord, why me?"

The greatest want in the religion of children is generally a *sense of sin*. Artless simplicity and confidence in what is told, are in some respects natural to children ; and this is the reason why we are so often deceived by promising appear-

ances in childhood. The reality of grace in a child is best known by his sense of sin. Little James often wondered "how God sent his servant sae often to him, such a hell-deserving sinner." This was a common expression of his. On one occasion, he said, "I have a wicked, wicked heart, and a tempting devil. He'll not let me alone; but this is all the hell that I'll get. Jesus bore my hell already. Oh Margaret, this wicked heart of mine would be hell enough for me though there was no other. But there are no wicked hearts in heaven." Often he prayed, "Come, Holy Spirit, and make me holy; make me like Jesus."

The way of salvation through *the righteousness of Christ* was always sweet to him. He had an uncommon grasp of it; Christ crucified was all his salvation, and all his desire. One day his sister said to him, "You must meet death in Jesus, and go to the judgment-seat in Jesus, and spend eternity in Jesus. You will be as hell-deserving in yourself when you stand before the throne as now." He smiled sweetly, and said, "Oh, Margaret, I see it must be all Jesus from beginning to end."

Another time a little boy who was in concern for his soul came to see James, and told him

how many chapters he had read, and how often he had prayed. James did not answer at the time, but a little after he said to his sister, "David was here, and told me how many chapters he had read, etc. I see he's upon the working plan ; but I must tell him that it's no his reading, nor yet his praying, but Jesus alone that must save him."

Another day he said, "The devil is letting me see that this word and another word in my prayer is sin ; but I just tell him it is *all* sin. I bid him go to Jesus ; there is no sin in him ; and I have taken him to be my Saviour."

He had a very clear discovery of the dead and helpless condition of the carnal mind, and of the *need of the Holy Spirit* to convert the soul. Telling me once of the boy under concern, and of what he had been saying to him, he added, "But it is all in vain to speak of these things without the Holy Spirit." Often when he saw the family preparing to go to church, he would pray that I might be filled with the Holy Spirit in speaking, so that some sinners might be converted. "I mind," remember, "often sitting on the pulpit stairs careless ; I would like if I had that place again. If I might hear but one sermon, I would not be so careless now." He often wished to

be carried to the church, but was never able to bear the exertion.

He was no stranger to *temptations* from the wicked one. I scarcely ever visited him but he spoke to me of these. Once he said, "The devil often tempts me to think upon good people, but I tell him it is Christ I want." Another time, "What do you think? The devil now tempts me to believe that I'll never be saved, because I repented on my death-bed." Often when tempted he would cry, "If I perish, I'll perish at Christ's feet." The last text I explained to him was, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith," 2 Tim. 4:7; showing him that, from conversion to coronation, the life of a believer was one continued fight. He said, "Would you not think that the devil would let a poor young creature like me alone? but he's an awful tempter."

He had a mind that loved to think on the "deep things of God." One day a believer called and prayed beside his bed, asking for him that he might be "filled with all the fulness of God." The same person came another day, and before praying inquired, "What shall I ask for you?" He said, "You mind what you sought for me the last time. You prayed that I might be

filled with all the fulness of God ; I canna get any more than that, but dinna seek any less to-day."

A dear Christian lady used to bring him flowers. She spoke to him of Christ being "the lily of the valley," and on one occasion brought him one. He asked her to pick it out from the rest, and give it into his hand. Holding the gentle flower in his pale wasted fingers, he looked at it, and said, "This might convince the world that there is a God, though there were nothing else. Aye, there is a God, there is a heaven, there is a hell, and there is a judgment-seat, whether they will believe it or no." He said this in a very solemn way, pausing after every member of the sentence.

He loved *singing praise* to God, though not able to join in it himself. He frequently made us sing beside his bed, and often bade them sing the twenty-third Psalm. "I have no strength to sing here," he would say ; "I have a heart, but not strength ; when I get to heaven, I'll be able to sing there." Sometimes he would bid them sing these words : "I'm not ashamed to own my Lord." He often repeated that hymn, and he left it in charge that it should be sung by the scholars on the night of his death.

My sister once sent him a hymn, "The fulness

of Jesus." He said he liked it all, but he liked the last verse best :

"I long to be with Jesus,
Amid the heavenly throng,
To sing with saints his praises,
To learn the angels' song."

He delighted in *secret prayer*. In weakness and pain, he spent hours upon his knees communing with an unseen God. When too weak for the outward part of the exercise, he said, "Oh, Margaret, I prayed to Jesus as long as I was able. But now I'm not able, and he does not want it from me ; but I'm just always giving him my heart." Many a night he got no sleep. I asked him if he wearied during the silent watches. He said, "No ; his left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me."

God gave this dear boy a very *calm and cheerful spirit* in the midst of all his trials. Neither bodily pain nor the assaults of the devil could sour his temper or ruffle his placid brow. At any time when his pain increased, he would say, "It is the Lord ; let him do what seemeth him good." One time in deep darkness, he cried out, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Again, when his soul was more in the light, he would say, "'I long to depart, and to be with

Christ, which is far better ; but then I'm willing to wait the Lord's time ; good is the will of the Lord." Again he would say, "I long to be with Jesus. I long to see Jesus, that died for me. If I am spared to go out again, I must just go leaning upon these words, 'My grace is sufficient for thee.' They will be sure to mock me, but they mocked Jesus before." Once he said to me, "I have often wondered when I have heard you say that Christ was sweet ; but now I feel him to be *sweet, sweet.*"

On the last day of 1841, he said to his sister, "I will tell you what I would like for my New-year's gift : I would like a praying heart, and a heart to love Christ more." Next day a woman came in, and said, "Poor Jamie, you'll get no fun this New-year's-day." James said, "Poor body, she thinks like as I care for the New-year. I have far better than you have, though you had the whole world. This is the happiest New-year's-day that ever I had, for I have Christ." She was very deaf, and did not hear what he said ; but he often pitied that woman, and prayed for her. At another time his father said, "Poor Jamie." He replied, "Ah, father, don't call me poor, I am rich ; they that have Christ have all things." A little after the New-year, he

said, "Margaret, I am not to die yet, for I have mair to suffer ; but I am willing, though it should be for years." On one occasion when he was suffering much pain, he said, "Five minutes in glory will make up for all this suffering." When Margaret had to go out with her father's dinner, she used to lock the door, leaving James alone within. On returning, she asked, "Were you wearying, Jamie?" His reply was, "Oh no ; Jesus takes care of me when you are out." One of his country friends came in one day to see him, and said, "I am sure you have a weary time of it, Jamie." He said, "Oh no, I *never* weary ; Christ keeps me from wearying."

After a very happy communion-season in April, I went to visit him, and he spoke in a most touching manner : "I was not sorry on Sabbath that all the people were sitting at the Lord's table, and I lying here, for I thought I would soon be at the table above with Christ, and then I would be far happier."

In a season of great darkness, he called for his Dew-Drops, and sought out the verse, "The Lord is a strong-hold in the day of trouble, and he knoweth them that trust in him." He said, "Margaret, I'll trust in him, though I cannot see him. I will lie down upon that verse." When

his bed was made at night, he would take another verse "to lie down upon," as he called it; so he was fed by the dew and the word.

A young woman who lived in the same lane was awakened to deep concern the same winter that James was brought to Christ. Before her concern she never came in to see James, though her mother often advised her to do so. But when she was brought to feel her sin and misery, she came in every Sabbath night, and was always tenderly kind to James. "How are you to-night, Jamie?" she would say; "you are well off when you can say, I have found Christ." Early in spring this young woman evidently found the true rest for her weary soul in Jesus. She became a candidate for the Lord's table, and was to have been admitted, but God called her away to sit at the table that can never be withdrawn. She died full of joy, with the praises of God upon her lips. Margaret had been present at this interesting death-bed, and when she returned home she told James. He answered with great composure, "I wish I had been away with her; but I must wait the Lord's time. Betsy is singing now, and I will soon be there too."

James used to take the bitterest medicines without any reluctance. He folded his hands,

shut his eyes, and asked God to bless it to him. "Ah, Margaret, if God do not bless it to me, it will do me no good." Often she asked, "Is it not bitter?" He would say, "Yes, but Jesus had a bitterer cup to drink for me."

In the summer of 1841, another remarkable boy, named James Wallace, had died in the Lord. He was one whom God had taught in a wonderful manner. He had a singular gift of prayer, and was made useful to many, both old and young. James Laing had known him well in former days. In 1839, a younger brother of James Laing, named Patrick, had died also, not without pleasing marks of having undergone a divine change. It is needful to know these things, to understand the following dream of our little pilgrim.

A short time after he believed, he said, "Margaret, I will tell you my dream." Margaret was afraid of some fancy leading him astray, and asked what it was.

JAMES. I thought there was a ladder, the foot of it on earth, and the top of it reaching to heaven. I thought it was heaven I saw. There was a great multitude of people, but I knew none of them but Patrick and Jamie Wallace. When I was standing on the first or second

step of the ladder, Jamie Wallace looked down and said, "Aye, here's another one coming stepping up." He explained it by referring to Jacob's ladder, and that Jesus is the ladder. Margaret said, "Aye, and you are just on the first step."

In the latter part of his illness he was used as an instrument in awakening another boy, whose impressions I earnestly hope may never wear away. David G—— had been a very wild boy ; so much so, that he was expelled from the Sabbath-school. He found his way into James' cottage, and there saw exemplified the truths he would not listen to in school. From that day till James died, David regularly visited him, and learned from him with deepest interest the things that belonged to his peace. James often prayed with him alone. Sometimes both prayed at the same time for a new heart. Margaret was always made to withdraw at these times. He pleaded with this boy to seek Jesus when young, "for it's easier to find Jesus when we are young. Look at Annie," a grown-up person, who had been long under concern, "she has been long in seeking Christ, and she is long in finding. Mind what I tell you, for I will soon be in heaven."

DAVID. Will you get to heaven?

JAMES. Oh yes ; all that believe in Christ get to heaven, and I believe that Jesus died for me. Now, David, if I see you on the left hand, you will mind that I often bade you come to Christ.

DAVID. I'll have naebody to pray with me, and tell me about my soul, when you are dead.

JAMES. I have bidden Margaret pray for you, and I have told the minister ; and go you to our kirk, and he will tell you the way to come to Christ.

Three times a day did this anxious inquirer seek the prayers and counsels of his youthful instructor, till James' strength gave way, and he could talk no more. The day before he died, the boy came in ; James could hardly speak, but he looked steadily at him, and said, "Seek on, David."

The last visit I paid to this young Christian was on the Tuesday before he died, in company with Mr. Miller and Mr. Smith, one of our Jewish missionaries, who was that same day to sail from his native land. After speaking a little we prayed, and I asked him what I should pray for. James said, "Dying grace." He shook hands with us all. When the missionary held his hand, he said, "God's people have much

need to pray for you and for them there." When we had gone out, he said, "Maybe I'll never see the minister again."

On Thursday he said, "Ah, Margaret, mind it's no easy to die. You know nothing about it. Even though you have Christ, it is dark." The same day he bade her give David G—— his Sunday trowsers and new boots, that he might go to the church. He gave his father The Dying Thief, and said, "I am going to give Alick my Bible," meaning Dew-drops. There was a piece of money under his pillow. He said it was to buy Bibles for them that never heard of Jesus.

His aunt came in on Friday morning. He said, "Oh, aunt, do n't put off seeking Christ to a death-bed; for if I had Christ to seek to-day, what would have become of me? but I have given my heart to Christ." Margaret asked him, "What shall I do? I shall miss your company in the house." James answered, "You must just go the more to Jesus. Do not be ill about me now, when I am dead, Margaret. If I thought that, I would be sorry; and more than that, God would be angry at you; for I shall be far happier. It is better to depart and be with Christ. Ask grace to keep you from it."

All that day he spoke very little. In the evening he grew much worse. His sister wished to sit up with him that night, but he would not allow her. She said, "These eyes will soon see Him whom your soul loves." James said, "Aye." After midnight, Margaret, seeing him worse, arose and woke her father. She tried to conceal her tears; but James saw them, and said, with a look of solemn earnestness, "O woman, I wonder to see you do the like of that." He spoke little after this, and about one o'clock on Saturday morning, June 11, 1842, fell asleep in Jesus.

From this affecting history, *all children* should learn an impressive lesson. What is said of Abel is true of this dear boy: "He being dead, yet speaketh." Now that he has gone to the world of praise and holiness and love, the history of his dying hours is a warning and an invitation to each of you. You see here that you are not too young to have the Holy Spirit striving with you. You are not too young to resist the Holy Ghost. You are not too young to be converted and brought to Christ. If you die without Christ you will surely perish. Many of you are wicked, idle, profane, prayerless, ungodly children. Some of you are open Sabbath-

breakers, liars, and swearers. If you die thus, you will have your portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. You will see this little boy, and others whom you know, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. O repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out. You may die very soon. O that your latter end may be like his!

How evident is it, that God is willing and able to convert the young. How plain that if God give grace, they can understand and relish divine things as fully as those of mature age. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." Let us seek the *present* conversion to Christ of our little children. Jesus has reason to complain of us that he can do no mighty works in our Sabbath-schools because of our unbelief.

"Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen."

ANNIE AND ROSABELLE;
OR,
THE TRUE RICHES.



—67—

PUBLISHED BY THE
AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY.

150 NASSAU-STREET, NEW YORK.



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CHAPTER I.

It was the first day of my school in Chestnut Grove. One by one the scholars had come in and taken their seats, and now all was quiet.

Most of the faces which were turned towards me were bright with intelligence ; but there was one which peculiarly interested me, that of a girl of ten summers, but small for her age, who sat by herself, with her hands folded meekly in her lap. There was a touching look of sadness around the mouth, and the eyelids drooped timidly over the soft brown eyes. In the next seat sat Rosabelle Lee, a perfect contrast to Annie Grey. Rosabelle was the petted child of wealthy parents, and I thought if she was as good as she was fair, I should love her dearly. At the close of the school, she stood at my side.

"Will you go home with me to-night, Miss Hale ?" said she pleasantly. "Mamma said I might ask you."

"Yes, thank you," replied I ; and we went out together. I could not see any thing of little Annie, and turning to Rosabelle, I asked, "Who is Annie Grey ; and where does she live ?"

"O she lives about a mile from here, and generally goes home across lots. There she is now, half way over the meadow. Her folks are dreadful poor ; her father is a cripple, and her mother takes in washing."

The last words she said with a peculiar emphasis and a scornful toss of the head, of which

I took no notice. Soon after, she requested me to change her seat in school, evidently in order to avoid poor Annie. I was pained to discover such a disposition in one so beautiful and so young, but consented to the change, for which she thanked me gracefully. It was not long before the little girl pointed out her home, a large white house half hid by the thick foliage of ancient elms and maples, and the front yard full of choice shrubs and flowers.

"It is very beautiful," I said ; and I fancied that the smile on my companion's face had more of vanity than real heartfelt pleasure in it, as she replied, "Papa has spared neither pains nor expense to make it so."

As we went slowly up the broad gravel walk, Rosabelle stopped every now and then to explain how some flower had been brought from the east, or some choice shrub from the far south, to add to the beauty of the garden ; and when we entered the parlor, she introduced me to her mother with an ease and grace which I had seldom seen in one so young. Mrs. Lee made me welcome, and in a little while I felt quite at home in her society.

After tea Rosabelle showed me her pets. She had birds in richly gilt cages, snow white rab-

bits running about like tame kittens, and a beautiful little spaniel, which was a very knowing dog. Then there was her play-room, furnished with all that a little girl could wish, and I said, as I looked around, "You have every thing to make you happy, Rosabelle."

"But she is not always happy. Indeed, she has the blues very often," said Mrs. Lee.

"Ah," said I, "what can she find to have the blues about?"

"That is what puzzles me," replied the mother. "I hope you will be able to find out and correct the fault, for I would have my little girl always cheerful and happy."

After a pleasant hour, which we enjoyed together in rambling over the beautiful garden, the sun went down, the dew began to fall, and we were obliged to return to the house just as the pale primroses were sending forth their evening offering of delicious perfume.

I sat for a long time in the little room which Mrs. Lee assigned me for the night; and though every thing had passed so pleasantly, I felt sad at the thought that this house of wealth and splendor was not a house of prayer, and that those who dwelt in it were not in possession of the "true riches."

CHAPTER II.

EARLY in the morning I was awakened by the glad song of a wood-robin, which had lit in the tree under my window, and seemed to say, "Arise, arise, and praise the Lord for his goodness."

At the breakfast-table I looked around in vain for Rosabelle, and it was not till the meal was half finished that she made her appearance, with a slow, moping movement ; and I knew from her flushed cheeks and swollen eyes that she had been crying. I could scarcely believe that it was the same child that I had admired so much the day before.

I was in hopes Rosabelle would get over her ill-humor before school-time ; but she did not, and things went wrong all day.

After school, I asked Rosabelle to stay with me a while ; and when the other children were gone, I said to her kindly, "You have been very unhappy to-day. Can you tell me the reason ?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," replied the child, sullenly.

"Shall I tell you ? You have made yourself

unhappy. You gave way to a wrong temper this morning, and it has made you wretched all day."

The child's face grew very red, and she made me no answer, so I went on. "Now is the time to correct this fault ; for a hasty temper, if not early brought under subjection, always grows with one's growth."

She made a movement as if to rise, but I gently detained her. "Sit still, Rosabelle. I am your friend, and it is because I love you that I have sought this interview. I would have you a good and happy little girl—gentle, meek, and lowly in heart, loving and beloved by all. In short, I would have you a Christian."

"Me, Miss Hale ! Would you have me turn into an old woman ?"

"No, Rosabelle ; I would have you just what your Creator designed you to be—a glad-hearted little girl, making sunshine for yourself and those with whom you associate. True piety, my dear child, never makes one less happy ; on the contrary, it fits its possessors to appreciate more fully all that is good and beautiful, and to enjoy with a higher relish the innocent pleasures of life."

"I thought religion always made folks dull

and sober. There's Annie Grey ; they say she is pious ; and if she is, deliver me from piety."

"Why, what has Annie done?"

"Oh, I don't know, but I hate her. She is a nobody, and always will be. Mamma would be very angry, if I should think of associating with her."

"But, Rosabelle, suppose you should go out into your garden some fine morning, and find the most lovely girl you ever beheld, dressed in spotless white, with a crown of diamonds, and a golden harp on which she could play the most entrancing strains ; what would you do ?"

"Invite her into the house, and try to make her my friend. But what has this to do with Annie Grey ?"

"This much, my dear child ; that if Annie is a true Christian, she will soon be, notwithstanding her poverty, fully equal to the girl I have described to you."

"How ?" exclaimed Rosabelle, wonderingly. She evidently did not comprehend me.

"You know that all who love Christ go to heaven when they die."

"Yes, ma'am ; so the Bible says."

"Well, if Annie's heart is right, and she were to die, she would go right to heaven. There she will be clothed in white robes, and a crown

of light and a harp of gold will be given her. She will be like a glorious angel, Rosabelle. The same soul that now looks at you through her soft brown eyes, will by and by dwell in a glorious body in the paradise of God."

"Oh, I never thought of that before ; I never thought of Annie's becoming like an angel. I shall love her more than I have done, and will treat her better in future."

"Thank you for that promise, Rosabelle ; and will you not try also to subdue your hasty temper? Will you not study your Bible, and pray earnestly to the Lord to forgive your sins, and give you a new heart?"

"Oh, I cannot, indeed I cannot, Miss Hale ; I have been so used to having my own way in every thing."

"I know it will be very hard for you ; but the longer you wait, the harder it will be. Now is the best time to begin. Oh, Rosabelle, if you only would repent of your sins, and give your heart to the Saviour, what a joy, what a blessing it would be ;" and as I laid my hand on her golden curls, and imprinted a parting kiss upon her cheek, I earnestly besought the Lord to renew and purify her young heart, and make her a true child of God.

CHAPTER III.

As the days went by, I saw with gratitude a marked improvement in Rosabelle. She was more gentle among her playmates, more kind and considerate when their wishes clashed with her own, and seemed to be trying to do right. She was very kind too to Annie Grey, though she avoided her society as much as possible. She had been taught to think of Annie as an inferior, and that it was a disgrace to associate with her ; and this rooted prejudice was not to be overcome in a few days or weeks.

My school had been in session several weeks, and I had not yet seen Annie's parents ; so one night I said, "Wait a moment, Annie, and I will go home with you." A few minutes afterwards we were in the meadow among the fragrant clover blossoms. A delightful walk of ten minutes, one more fence to climb, and then we entered a bit of beautiful shady woods. The sun was low, and his mellow golden light glimmered through the trees ; while the evening breeze, which rose and fell fitfully, came to us laden with bird melody and the perfume of wild

flowers. I paused upon the brow of a little hill to enjoy more fully the beautiful scene, and to adore the Creator in my heart ; and as I gazed and listened, Annie said with emotion, "Do you wonder that I love to come this way?"

"No, indeed ; it is a beautiful spot."

"Yes, more than beautiful, Miss Hale. The sunset, the trees, the birds and flowers are beautiful when taken separately ; but how much more so when they are all together in such harmony."

Slowly we went along the narrow pathway that led down the hill, and in a little while came to the open pasture land, and Annie pointed out to me her home. It was a low unpainted building, with square windows and doors painted red, and stood alone in a little meadow. Still there was an air of quiet and homely comfort about the little domicile that pleased me much. Creeping vines and roses were trained over the windows and around the doors, and flower-beds were tastefully arranged in the front yard. "You have a very pleasant place here," I said.

"Yes, we try to make it so," she replied, "though we have n't any thing nice but our flowers. We are poor ; but this, you know, cannot hinder us from being happy, if we live right."

"Very true, Annie ; there is no happiness like that which springs from the favor of God. The riches of this world are good in their place ; but they are nothing when compared with the riches of the true Christian, the pearl of great price."

Little Annie's looks showed that she felt this to be true, and that her treasure was laid up in heaven ; but she did not speak again until we entered the house. Then she introduced me to her parents, and setting me a chair, took my satchel and bonnet and carried them into a little recess, which was separated from the main room by a coarse white curtain. Then she went to her father, and smoothed the stray locks away from his forehead, and kissed him, while he silently asked a blessing upon his dutiful and affectionate child.

Mrs. Grey set away her spinning-wheel ; and while she and Annie were making preparations for supper, I entered into conversation with Mr. Grey. He talked for a while on the subject of religion, and then, at my request, told me the story of his misfortunes.

"Several years ago," said he, "when Annie was quite a babe, we owned a snug little home, and had things very comfortable around us. I had plenty of work to do, and owed no man

any thing ; and as we were blessed with contented dispositions, we were happy. But our heavenly Father saw fit to send great tribulations upon us. First our house was burned down ; then came a season of drought, in which my crops failed and my cattle died ; and last of all I met with an accident which crippled me, as you see.. For seven years I have been entirely helpless ; but I try to bear up under my afflictions cheerfully. It is good to be afflicted in the loss of temporal things, if we are thus enriched in soul through the Saviour's love ”

Supper was soon ready. Very simple and plain was this meal ; but when the good man folded his hands and devoutly asked God's blessing upon it, it seemed to me a supper fit for kings. Family prayer followed, at which Mr. Grey read the nineteenth Psalm, and we all united in singing that beautiful hymn,

“The day is past and gone,” etc.

As I laid my head upon the pillow that night, I could not help drawing a contrast between Mr. Lee and Mr. Grey, and their respective families ; and I said to myself, Verily, there is a wealth that maketh poor, and a poverty that serves but to enrich.

CHAPTER IV.

SEVERAL days now passed without any thing worthy of note occurring, save that Rosabelle was quite serious, and Annie not well. Dear Annie was never very strong, but of late she had seemed in a sort of gentle decline. She did not suffer pain, but I was sure her pale face grew paler and her delicate form more slender every day ; and when the sultry days of August came, she grew weak and languid.

I had not seen Mrs. Grey for several weeks, and fearing that she might be still ignorant of the truth, I resolved to go home with Annie and talk with her that very night.

As we entered the meadow, we were talking about the flowers, which Annie seemed to love dearly. "How delicately some of them are colored," she said, "and what an expression there is on their sweet faces, as though they would say, 'God is good ; he made us, and cares for us.'"

"Yes," I said, "I often admire the power and wisdom of God displayed in their delicate structures, and love to think their delicious perfume

is exhaled like incense as a thank-offering to their Creator."

There was a sweet smile on little Annie's face, and she nestled her hand in mine confidently as we entered the woods and walked on in silence, till we came to the brow of the hill where I had caught such a glimpse of Annie's young heart on the occasion of my first visit. "Will you sit here a while with me?" asked she, pausing in the very place where we had stopped before.

"With pleasure," I said; "but, darling, how pale you look. How selfish I have been not to think of you, and stop to rest before."

"No, no," she said; "you are not to blame in the least. I tire very easily of late, and a little exertion makes my breath come short and quick, as you see. My cough too is growing more troublesome. Do you think it will ever be any better?"

"Have you never thought what it may lead to?" I asked, after a moment's silence.

Annie pointed expressively to the ground, and then lifted her eyes, beaming with love and faith, to the clear blue sky, which seemed smiling upon us but a little way above the tree tops.

I saw at once that my little friend had no

fears of death ; and was delighted to find, as she freely opened her heart to me, how calmly she trusted in the Saviour and relied on his promises, taking him simply at his word. One thing only seemed to grieve her ; and that was the thought of leaving her beloved parents in their poverty and loneliness. But she found relief in committing them to the care of the Saviour they loved.

"O how much I love them," she said. "Then too, I am all the child they have, and it will be so hard for them to part with me. This is what grieves me most. Papa, you know, is old and lame, and mamma has to work very hard to support us."

"Your parents will no doubt grieve much for you," I said ; "but they are true Christians, and will, I trust, be reconciled to the will of their heavenly Father."

"Oh, I am glad to hear you say so," exclaimed Annie ; "and you will talk with them about it, wont you ? I'm afraid they don't realize how ill I am."

A little while longer we talked together, and then went down the hill, and wended our way slowly across the fields.

Arrived at the house, I was warmly welcomed

by Mr. and Mrs. Grey, and an hour passed in pleasant conversation. We said nothing, however, about Annie's health until supper was nearly ready, when she took a small tin pail from the shelf, and went to the spring for water. As she went, she turned to me, and her eyes said, Tell them all about it while I am gone.

I complied with her wish, and soon found that her parents were aware of her danger, and ready to acquiesce in the will of God. They were much affected as I repeated to them our conversation in the woods, which I had hardly finished when the subject of our thoughts entered with the little pail of water, singing,

"Oh, we shall happy be,
When, from sin and sorrow free,
Lord, we shall live with thee
- For evermore."

Soon we were summoned to the table, and after the blessing was asked, I glanced from one to another of the family group. The mother's lips wore a peaceful smile, though her hand shook as she turned the tea. The father was calm, and conversed cheerfully; while little Annie, glancing from one to the other affectionately, seemed very happy. Unconsciously my

own heart grew lighter as I sat in that peaceful circle, and I felt sure that God was there.

A number of days passed after this visit at Mr. Grey's, and still Annie came regularly to school, till an event occurred which laid her up at home. Towards the close of a sultry day, I saw every indication of an approaching storm, and omitting several classes, I closed the school, and taking Annie under my care, hastened towards her home, hoping to reach it before the storm came on. We had not passed through the woods, however, before a deafening peal of thunder broke over our heads, and the heavy raindrops came pouring down through the trees ; and long before we reached home, we were drenched with rain.

Mrs. Grey assisted us to exchange our wet garments for dry and warm ones as soon as possible ; but poor Annie took a severe cold, and when I left her the next morning, she appeared seriously unwell.

CHAPTER V.

BEFORE I reached the school-house, I was surprised to see Rosabelle coming to meet me.

"Oh, Miss Hale," said she, "you got wet last night, didn't you? You could not have gone more than half way before the rain came."

"We were just about half way," I replied, "when the storm reached us, and we got thoroughly soaked, I assure you."

"Oh, I am so sorry. But where is Annie?"

"She is not able to come to school to-day; she is quite ill."

"I was afraid it would be so. How sorry I am that I could not invite her home with me. I am very unhappy, Miss Hale. I don't believe there is another girl in the world that is so unhappy as I am. I would give every thing I have for that peace of mind which you and Annie were talking about the other day."

"You can have it, Rosabelle. All that you need do is to give your heart to the Saviour."

"You speak as though it was a very simple thing to give one's heart to the Saviour, Miss Hale; but I cannot do it. I have tried and tried, but it is all in vain."

"I am afraid you have not tried right, Rosabelle. The Saviour never refuses those who come to him sincerely penitent and believing."

"Perhaps I am not sincere enough, or not penitent enough for my past sins; but," she added earnestly, "I am going to keep trying. I will not give up until the Lord blesses me."

I was glad to hear Rosabelle say this; and with a few words of counsel and encouragement, our conversation ended, for we had reached the school-house.

Many times that day I looked towards Annie's vacant seat, and at the close of school I went again to spend the night with her.

Mrs. Grey met me at the door, and in reply to my anxious inquiry, shook her head sadly. "She is much worse, Miss Hale. We have had to send for the doctor this afternoon, and he talks very discouragingly about her. He says she has a severe attack of lung fever, and that her lungs were in such a diseased state before, that there is but little chance for her recovery. Poor child, how glad she will be to see you. She has talked about you a great deal to-day."

All that night I watched over her; and she talked at intervals of Jesus and heaven, and about the spiritual welfare of her school-mates.

On leaving her in the morning, I promised to bring Rosabelle to see her, greatly to her delight.

When I asked Rosabelle to go to Mr. Grey's with me, she raised her head with surprise, and something of the old proud look came back to her face; but when I told her how ill Annie was, and how much she wanted to see her, she said, "I will go with you, Miss Hale; perhaps it may do me some good, and if not, it will be a satisfaction to her."

Annie was overjoyed to see her, and talked with her long and affectingly. I was glad to see that what she said made a serious impression on Rosabelle's mind, and I prayed earnestly that the lesson might be blessed to her spiritual good. Nearly an hour she sat holding Annie's hand and listening to her; then bidding her good-by with a kiss, she promised to come again, and took her leave.

For a long time after she was gone, Annie lay with her eyes closed and her hands folded, and I knew by the movement of her lips that she was praying for Rosabelle Lee.

Next day Rosabelle was not at school; but she had been absent before, and it was not till a second and a third day had passed without her making her appearance, that I began to be

alarmed about her, and called to inquire if she was ill.

Mrs. Lee received me very coldly, said her daughter was not very well, and she had concluded not to let her come to school any more. I expressed my surprise and regret, and asked to see her; but her mother politely declined, saying that Rosabelle's mind was in such a state of excitement that she was unwilling to risk an interview. Feeling myself an unwelcome intruder, I quietly withdrew, with many fears that the child whom I had almost counted as a "lamb of the fold," would forget the lessons of truth she had learned, and grow weary in seeking the Saviour. But I could only commend her to the care of Him in whom is all our hope.

Several days passed, and then a tearful group stood round the bed where sweet Annie Grey lay dying. Through all her distressing illness she had borne her pain without murmuring, and now, even while she was grappling with the king of terrors, the little sufferer was calm and resigned. After a severe spasm, she looked up to her mother with a smile, and said, "It's almost over now, dear mamma. My pains will soon cease, and I shall be at home with Jesus." Then, after a short pause, she added, with a

look of animation, "Oh, if this is death, how sweet it is to die. I am happy ; Oh, so happy ! Oh, father—mother, pray. Kneel by the bedside and bless the Lord for his loving kindnesses and tender mercies." She said no more ; but listening to the voice of thanksgiving and praise, with a smile of peace on her lips she went down into the dark valley.

The next day but one the remains of little Annie were consigned to the grave, and many tears were shed by those who had known and loved her ; but all knew that our loss was her gain, and that it would be very wrong to wish her back again. I thought so too ; and as I stood by the open grave, I repeated to myself the words,

"Oh, mother Earth, we bring to thee
A priceless boon to-day,
And softly on thy quiet breast
Our blighted bud we lay :
Room in thy softest, greenest spot,
Room 'mid thy autumn flowers :
Dust only to thy care we give ;
She blooms in brighter bowers."

CHAPTER VI.

THREE weeks more, and my school closed. I was sad at the thought of leaving Chestnut Grove and my young charge. I had not seen Rosabelle to converse with her since her mother took her away from school ; for though I had called several times, she was not allowed to see me ; and now, the children told me, she had gone away with her father to visit some distant friends.

Before I went away, I called on all who had been connected with my school, not excepting the little one who dwelt alone in the narrow house appointed for all the living. It was sunset when I visited Annie's grave ; and as I sat by the little mound that awoke a thousand tender memories, the evening shades had deepened and the stars were out before I reluctantly withdrew, with my heart full of good resolves, among which was one that I would always remember Rosabelle Lee at the throne of grace.

Months passed, and though I had written several letters, I had heard not a word from Chest-

nut Grove. The following short letter was the first that I received :

“Miss HALE—I write you at the urgent request of Rosabelle, who is quite ill. She is very uneasy in her mind, and extremely anxious to see you; so you will come to us, I hope, at your earliest convenience. The physicians give us but little hope of her recovery. Oh, I am sure it will kill me if my child dies. I don’t know what I have ever done that I should be so deeply afflicted. Come soon, and oblige,

“A. C. LEE.”

Grief and joy strove for the mastery in my mind when I read this unexpected invitation; and you may be sure I lost no time in preparing to hasten to my dear young friend, that I might impart to her that consolation she so much needed, and which her father’s gold could not buy. On the same day, when the afternoon stage came along, I took a place among its passengers; and though our progress was slow, because of the bad roads, on the second day I arrived at Mrs. Lee’s. She met me in the hall, and taking my hand warmly, said she was glad I had come so soon. Poor Rosabelle was “no better.” I laid aside my travelling dress, and Mrs. Lee went to tell her I had come. She had

been gone but a few moments, when the parlor door opened, and Mrs. Grey stood before me. With an exclamation of surprise, I sprang forward, and was folded to her kind, motherly heart. I asked her how it happened that she was there, and she replied that Rosabelle had taken it into her head that no one else could take care of her ; so Mr. Lee had employed her to nurse the child, and gave her very liberal wages. And now for the first time I learned that Mr. Grey was not alive, having fallen asleep in Christ two months before.

At this moment Mrs. Lee returned for me, and we went up stairs together.

“ Oh, I am so glad you have come,” exclaimed Belle, holding out both her emaciated hands, “ I am so glad !” Her lip began to quiver, and her eyes to fill with tears ; and to soothe her, I said cheerfully, “ If you are glad to see me, Rosabelle, you must not cry ;” and sitting down beside her, I talked familiarly and pleasantly until the tea-bell rang.

“ Now you must go,” said she ; “ but please come back again after supper. I love to hear you talk. I love to have you near me, and I want you to read to me in the Bible, and explain it just as you used to do in school.”

CHAPTER VII.

ROSABELLE was more beautiful, if possible, than when I first saw her in the bloom of health. Though her body and limbs were much emaciated, her face had lost but little of its roundness. Her skin was of a pearly whiteness, a hectic glow came and went upon her cheeks, and her eyes glowed with unwonted brilliancy.

"Do you think I shall ever get well?" asked she the next day, as I sat with her in the room alone. "You need n't be afraid to tell me what you think about it, for it cannot be worse than what I believe. I know I am going to die."

"And how do you feel in view of the great change?" said I, taking her hand in my own.

"I hardly know. Sometimes I am willing to die, and then I am very happy; but oftener my mind is filled with doubts, and I shrink from the thought of death. Oh, Miss Hale, can you tell me? Has the Lord forgiven my sins, or am I self-deceived?"

"I hope you are not deceived, Rosabelle. Have you not had some satisfying evidence that your sins were forgiven?"

"I think I have," replied she. "At times I am very happy; and even in my darkest hours I do not lose all trust in my Saviour."

"Do you love him supremely, and desire his favor above all else?"

"I think I do."

"If you do, dear child, be assured that he will in no wise cast you out. God, for his Son's sake, I trust, has pardoned your sins."

"Then why do I have these gloomy hours?"

"I think your doubts and fears arise from a want of *faith*," I replied.

"Perhaps so," said she. "It is only when I remember how wicked I have been, and how unworthy I am still, that the clouds come over my mind. It seems so strange that God can pardon those who have done no good thing in all their lives."

"Yes, it is strange. The great love which he bears to sinners is one of his brightest glories. And should we not have faith in Him who came to seek and to save those who are lost? Yes, Rosabelle, we should not doubt, but trust implicitly in the gracious promises of Him who hath said, 'Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.'

The child was about to reply, when the en-

trance of friends who had called to see her put an end to our conversation.

Time passed on, and every day as the dying girl grew more feeble, her hope and faith were strengthened, until no doubt cast its shadow over her happy spirit.

One day Mr. Lee, who watched over his fading child with the most intense anxiety, was sitting by the bedside, when she looked up and said, "Papa, how much would you give if you could cure me?"

"What a question, my child! I would give all I am worth in the world, if it would restore you to health," said the father, earnestly.

"But it wont, papa. The whole of it would not buy for me one moment of life, nor ease my pain."

"But why do you talk so, darling?"

"Oh, I want you to see, papa, that money, after all, isn't worth living for. I know that the world honors those who have it, but God does not; and he says in his holy word that 'it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.' You have often told me, papa, that you were making money for *me*; but now I am going to die, and in a little while you will have

to die too ; then what will you do with all your wealth ?”

There was an expression of pain on the father’s face, and he said almost sternly, “Rosabelle, do not talk so.”

“But I *must*,” replied the child. “I have been wanting to talk with you about these things for a long time, and I have a great deal that I wish to say. Are you not willing to listen to me, now that you know I must leave you so soon ?” Mr. Lee bowed his head in silence, and she went on. “Ever since I can remember, papa, you have been very kind to me, and I want to thank you for all your love and care, and ask your forgiveness for all I have ever done to grieve you. Will you forgive me, papa ?”

“Forgive you ! Yes, my darling. Had you done a thousand times worse, I should not remember it against you now.”

“And, papa, when I am gone, will you repent of your sins and give your heart to the Saviour ? Oh, I want you to come to heaven when you die ; and you cannot unless you are a Christian. Promise me, papa ; do promise me that you will seek the salvation of your soul ;” and in her earnestness the child put both arms round her parent’s neck, and laid her burning cheek close

to his ; nor did she rest until he gladdened her heart by giving her the promise she required.

“I promise you, Rosabelle, and may God help me to keep my promise.”

“And he will help you. He has said, ‘Knock, and it shall be opened ; seek, and ye shall find ; ask, and it shall be given unto you.’ Oh, papa, how happy, how very happy you have made me. I am ready to die. I have nothing more to live for.”

Every day we could see that Rosabelle faded more rapidly, and we knew the end of her sufferings was nigh. She talked as long as she was able of the goodness and mercy of the Saviour ; and when her voice failed, she smiled and raised her hands upward, as though to assure us that all was peace. So, before the wind flowers blossomed, or the early violets opened their azure eyes, Rosabelle Lee went to sleep to wake no more on earth.

They opened a grave for her close beside Annie Grey’s, for she had expressed a desire that it should be so, and laid her to rest with many bitter tears. But in their dark night of sorrow a light beamed in upon them, faint at first, but growing clearer the more they trusted and believed, until their hearts rejoiced in the light of the Sun of righteousness.

SELF-CONTROL.

A TRUE STORY.



—68—

PUBLISHED BY THE
AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY.

150 NASSAU-STREET, NEW YORK.

135



E. WHITNEY. DEL.

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CHAPTER I.

I AM going to tell you a story of my own childhood, which I hope will interest and benefit my young readers.

Early one spring, when I was about ten years old, my mother called me to her one bright day, and said, "Mary, I am going into the country to visit your aunt Amy, and I think I shall take you with me."

You may be sure this announcement gave me much joy. I jumped, laughed, clapped my hands, and capered about the room, making myself quite ridiculous in the excess of my delight. I had been housed up all winter in consequence of ill health, and the thought of going out into the beautiful open country, where I could roam over the broad fields and pluck the flowers, made me feel stronger and better than I had for many a day.

The hours passed heavily; and at first it seemed to me, in my impatience, as though the morrow never would come. But it did come at last, as all morrows will; and though the clouds hung low, and there was every prospect of rain, we set out early upon our little journey. At first it was rather dull and gloomy, for we had the carriage shut up to keep out the air, which was damp and chilly; but about ten o'clock the heavy mist began to rise from the fields, it grew lighter, the clouds broke away, the sun shone out cheerily, and every thing

seemed to smile. I smiled too; and now that I could see out, I found plenty to talk about. I chatted almost incessantly, and I am sure if my dear mother had not been one of the most patient women in the world, I must have greatly wearied her with my ceaseless questionings.

After we had gone a few miles, we came to a beautiful piece of woods, and mother asked John to drive very slow, that we might have the full benefit of the fine concert which a "star company" of birds was giving gratuitously among the tender green of the budding branches. Oh it was delightful. I was charmed with their melody and with the novelty of the scene, and begged that we might get out and walk a little way into the forest; and mother smilingly consented. So down John came from his seat, and helped us out; and while he stood by the horses, we went far into the shadowy recesses of the pleasant woods, where the birds carolled overhead, and the wind-flower and the modest violet looked up with their starry eyes from the ground at our feet. Mamma helped me gather a bouquet of the little blossoms, and then we returned to the carriage, where John was patiently waiting for us.

Soon we set forward again, and in a little while came to a beautiful brook; and John stopped on the rustic bridge that I might look at the little fishes, which were darting to and fro, diving, rising, turning over in all manner of ways, in their innocent freedom. I looked a long time, and was just turning away when I chanced to spy something prettier than the fishes, and clapped my hands with delight. There, just a little way above the water, was a bed of the most beautiful pale blue flowers, and they seemed nodding and blinking at me as the light breeze swept over them. "See, see," I cried, pointing to the little beauties; and mamma nodded and smiled as she replied, "Yes, they are forget-me-nots. John, will you be so kind as to get a handful of them for us? The horses are so gentle I can hold them." John willingly complied, and bounding over the fence, he soon returned with ever so many of the tiny azure blossoms, which seemed to smile out of their golden eyes as I looked admiringly down upon them.

"Oh, how very pretty they are," said I. "I think they are handsomer than the violets, and they are certainly more fragrant than the wind-flowers."

CHAPTER II.

THE sun was just setting, my violets were quite withered, and the little forget-me-nots had shut their golden eyes, when to my joy mother pointed out aunt Amy's house. Travel-worn as I was, the sight of the nice house nestled so cozily among the elm and maple trees, made me forget all about my fatigue, and I leaned eagerly from the carriage window, impatient to get a glimpse of aunt Amy and the cousins, whom I had not seen for a long time. Mother had written a letter to aunt, so that she was looking for us ; and before the carriage fairly stopped, she hurried down to the gate to greet us, followed by a merry troop of little ones.

I always loved aunt Amy, and I felt that I should love her now more than ever, as she welcomed us in her honest, hearty way.

"Oh I'm so glad to see you again," she said ; "I was afraid something would happen to detain you. The children have been running to and fro for the last hour, trying to see which would get the first sight of you ; and if you

could have heard the noise they made when the carriage drove over the hill, you would have some idea how they love you."

"But I tould n't holler so loud as I love aunty and tousin Mamy," said little Hiram; and we all laughed heartily as we went up the steps and entered the house.

We were too tired to enjoy much that night, and after tea we went early to bed. I lay for a long time thinking over the events of the day, then fell asleep, and did not wake again until it was broad morning, and the sun was shining in at the open window. The first thing I heard was a bird, singing loud enough almost to split his little throat; and jumping up, I ran to the window to see the little songster. And there, sure enough, in a little tree right under the window, was a beautiful bird with brown and golden plumage; and he did not seem at all afraid, but looked right at me with his bright eyes, and nodded his head while he warbled something which I interpreted as, "Good-morning, little girl. How d'ye do? how d'ye do?"

In a little while mother came up to help me dress, and when we went down, all the cousins, Fanny and George, Charlotte and Hiram, were waiting in the hall to bid me good-morning.

When the greetings were over, Fanny proposed that as there was time before breakfast, I should go out to the barnyard and see the calves and the little chickens. Mamma consented, and away we went, as happy as could be. When the old hen saw us coming, she spread her wings and bustled around with a great noise, as much as to say, "Touch one of my little chicks if you dare." But the calves were glad to see us, and made themselves quite familiar—a little too much so, I thought, when one great fat fellow got the corner of my nice white apron in his mouth, and began to chew it up for his breakfast. I was quite frightened, and was glad to get safely out of the yard, and promised myself that I would keep out for the future, which made little Hiram laugh heartily as he exclaimed, "You 'fraid of Bossy, tousin? Bossy tant bite; Bossy ha'n't dot no toofys."

Fanny now led the way to the swing, which was fixed in a big maple-tree at the back of the house; and as there was room on the seat for two, I took Lotty beside me, and away we went like birds.

When the breakfast bell rang, I went in, feeling as bright and as happy as a lark. Uncle Stephen, whom I had not seen before, was in

the dining-room, and he put both hands on my head, and spoke to me very kindly ; then turned to mother, saying, "She does n't look much like my little chicks. There's nothing like country air and bread and milk for making children healthy. Why, if Fanny and Lotty were so pale, I should think they were going to die. But if you stay with us long enough, little one, we will put some roses in your cheeks, I'm a thinking, and sha'n't charge any thing for it either." Dear uncle Stephen, how I loved him ; and when he folded his hands so reverently, and asked a blessing, I thought I had never seen a better man.

After breakfast was over, Fanny brought the Bibles, and each member of the family except little Hiram read two verses apiece, until a chapter was finished. Then uncle explained some of the difficult passages, so that we could understand them better ; and after that we all kneeled down, while he prayed the Lord to forgive us our sins, bless us with his love, and watch over and care for us through the day. Very earnestly he presented his petitions, and it seemed as though God was very near us. When I went out to play again, I felt that his all-seeing eye was upon me, and I resolved to be

very good all day, and neither say nor do any thing he would not approve.

We swung, jumped the rope, played hide-and-seek and blind-man's-buff until we were tired. Then we went into the garden, and built a baby-house out of some bits of board, and made believe we were grown-up people. We dressed up and went visiting, and talked with grave faces about the affairs of our respective families ; and Fanny, who was mistress of the house, brought some bits of cake and cheese, and set her table in a chair. Just in the midst of our fun, mamma and aunt Amy came out to see what had become of us, we had been away from the house so long ; and we laughed and hid our faces, and felt very foolish, until aunt Amy smiled and said she was glad to find us so pleasantly engaged. Then mamma distributed the little gifts she had brought from the city. There was a nice china set of tea things for cousin Fanny, a riding-whip for George, a big wax doll for Lotty, and a tin horse fastened to a tin cart for little Hiram. How happy they all felt with their treasures ; and when we were alone again, each little tongue was loud in its praises of aunt Julia, as they called my mother.

"I do believe she is the very best woman in the world," said Fanny. "And I, and I, and I," echoed the rest. This flattered my vanity, and I said quite pompously, "Yes, she *is* the best woman in the world."

"'Cept my moder," said little Hiram.

"Oh, your mother will do well enough," said I, "but she is n't such a lady as *my* mother is."

This speech caused quite a sensation among the cousins, as well it might. Fanny's face grew very red, but she spoke calmly as she said, "City people are sometimes more genteel than country folks; but, Mary, I do n't think your mother is any *better* than mine."

"No, indeed," exclaimed George, cracking his whip emphatically. "*My* mother's better than any other woman I know of."

"So she is," added Lotty. "I thank aunt Julia for bringing me this pretty doll, but I never could love her as I love my own dear mother."

"Nor I," said little Hiram. "Ki! see my hoss and buddy do;" and away went the toy, which he had fixed at the top of an inclined board, whizzing like a miniature locomotive.

I had provoked this discussion myself, and had no right to feel aggrieved; but I was vex-

ed that they had disputed me, and covering my face with my hands, began to cry.

"Oh, do n't cry," said Fanny, putting her arms around my neck and kissing me. "I did n't mean to hurt your feelings so; please forgive me."

Shamed by her gentleness, I wiped the tears away; but I felt somewhat sulky all the rest of the afternoon, and I am sure I must have made my young friends unhappy with my sour face.

Ah, my little readers, I had never learned the great lesson of *self-control*. Naturally of a slender constitution, and an only child, I had been petted and indulged all my life long; and because everybody tried to please me, and I had nothing to cross my wishes, I was called a very sweet-tempered child. I had never examined my heart very closely, but said my prayers with my lips night and morning, and was so self-conceited as to think myself a correct pattern, which all little girls would do well to follow.

Ah me, how blinded we are by prosperity. How little we know the true nature of our hearts until crosses and trials come, showing us our utter sinfulness and our helpless dependence upon our heavenly Father.

CHAPTER III.

THAT night, before we went to bed, aunt Amy said she had a nice plan for the morrow, and would tell us about it then, that we might all be up bright and early in the morning. She said if the weather was fine, we would all go on a picnic excursion in the woods, and have a sail on the river. This announcement gave us little ones unbounded delight. For my part, I hardly dared go to sleep, for fear I should not wake early enough; but tired nature at length asserted its right, and I dropped off into forgetfulness.

The first thing I heard when I opened my eyes in the morning was, not the song of the beautiful bird that had cheered me the morning before, but the dull patter of falling rain. How my heart sank; and with a fretful "Oh dear," I nestled back on my pillow, and cried with disappointment. Just then there was a gentle rap on the door. I neither spoke nor looked up, and the next moment a soft voice at the bedside said, "It is too bad; but cheer up, dear Mary; another day is coming; it is n't always going to rain."

It was Fanny, who with just as much cause to feel bad as I had, had come to comfort me. Her face was as bright as though there was not a cloud in the sky, and her smiles actually made it seem sunshiny in the room. I wondered how she could feel so cheerful, and said somewhat pettishly, "Oh dear, how can you be so happy? I don't believe you cared anything about going into the woods."

"Oh yes I did; I wanted to go very much," replied she; "but I knew fretting would n't make the rain stop, and I am trying to make the best of it."

"But how can you take it so coolly? For my part, I do n't like to be disappointed," said I.

"Nor I either," replied Fanny; "and I used to fret and cry when things did n't go just as I wanted them to, and make myself and my friends very unhappy, till I hope I learned the lesson of self-control."

"Self-control," said I; "that must be a very hard lesson to learn."

"Yes, it is hard," replied Fanny; "but there is One who will help you, and make it easy, if you go to him and ask him aright."

"You mean the Saviour," I said, reverently. Fanny nodded assent, and went on.

"Dear cousin, you cannot tell how much happier I am now than I used to be. Then, something was going wrong continually, and I was always in a pet. I often resolved to do better, and many times when I got up in the morning would make a great many good promises ; but I did n't ask the Lord to help me keep them, and they were sure to be broken before night." I thought of the resolutions I had made the day before, and how sadly they were broken, but said nothing, and Fanny continued, "I do n't know how long things would have gone on in the same way with me, if it had n't been for that accident which happened to Hiram a year ago."

"You mean his arm," said I. "Your mother wrote to us that he had fallen down stairs and broken it."

"Yes, but there is a story connected with it that you do n't know ; and it is so dreadful you will hardly believe it when I tell it to you. A year ago Hiram was quite a baby, and it was necessary for mother to go to the village for something one day, so she left him in my care, charging me not to leave him alone a minute, but to attend to him patiently until her return. For the first half hour I obeyed her ; then I

began to tire, and for change took the baby up stairs, though I knew all the time that mother would n't let me do it if she was at home. I gave him some papers to play with ; then got out my little work-basket, and went to sewing on some bits of silk mamma had given me to make my doll a dress. I worked for a while, then wondering why baby was so still, I looked around to see what he was doing. There he stood just behind me, with my beautiful new doll, which I had carelessly left in a chair, in his hands, and he had pulled nearly every curl from its head. I was angry, very angry ; and rushing up to him, I snatched the doll away, and struck him a hard blow on his face. He gave a loud cry, and stepped backwards ; but I followed him, and—Oh, Mary, I would n't have struck him again for the world, if I had supposed he was so near the stairway, but I was so blinded by passion that I didn't see it—and—and—he fell !”

“ Oh dear,” said I, shuddering, “ what did you do ?”

“ I didn't do any thing for a moment, but stood still, horrified at what I had done. Then I flew down stairs, and caught up baby in my arms. He lay so white and still that I thought

he was dead, and running out into the yard I screamed for help. In a few moments some of the neighbors came, and then from excess of terror I fainted away. When I came to, mother was bathing my face, and looking so pale and sad that I hardly knew her. I didn't speak; I didn't dare to ask if baby was dead, but pulled the quilt over my face and cried bitterly. Then mother went away, and I lay for a long time in the most agonizing suspense. At length I heard a low cry, which I knew to be Hiram's; and overjoyed that he was yet alive, I ran into the room, where several of the neighbors were with father and mother and the doctor standing around poor baby, who looked like a corpse. They did not notice me, and shrinking into a corner, I saw the doctor work at the little broken arm until I could bear it no longer, and I ran away out of doors.

“How I wept and prayed when I got quite alone by myself. Oh, Mary, it seemed as though I should die, I felt so bad. But after a while I grew calmer. In all my life I had never prayed before as I prayed then. I asked the Lord to take all anger and wickedness out of my heart, and to make me patient and good always. I think he heard me, for seldom since that day

have I been really angry or unkind to any one ; and if any thing happens to trouble me, I go away and pray, and somehow it seems all right, and I feel as bright and cheerful as can be."

"Oh, if I could only feel so," sighed I.

"And you can, dear cousin, without my terrible experience too," said Fanny, cheerfully. "The Saviour is always ready to pardon and help those who come to him ; and if you pray to him earnestly, he will hear and answer you."

I felt comforted by Fanny's words ; and when she went out, I knelt down and besought our heavenly Father to change my heart and make me his child, and to guide and bless me through the day. While I was praying, the unhappy feeling of disappointment went out from my heart, and a little ray of the sunshine which made Fanny's happiness, came in and lighted my bosom also. I had taken my first lesson in self-control.

CHAPTER IV.

THE day, notwithstanding the rain, passed very pleasantly. We had the garret, which was wide and roomy, for our playhouse ; and Fanny exerted herself so incessantly to amuse us, that we could not help being happy. When night came, I went to bed feeling quite satisfied with myself for the extra pains I had taken to do right ; and after a night of unbroken repose, I awoke with the first golden sunbeams shining in upon my face, and the sweet little bird singing merrily in the tree under the window. I was so overjoyed at the thought of the fine time we were going to have, that I almost forgot my prayers ; and I'm afraid I did n't ask the Divine blessing and guidance as I ought, I was in such a hurry.

After breakfast was over and the morning work was done, aunt Amy put some cake and cheese in a little basket, and we set out in high glee for the woods. It was but a little way down the lane, over a bit of meadow, and then we entered a beautiful maple grove. This was uncle Stephen's sugar orchard, where he made

nice maple sugar. There was a snug little cabin at the boiling place, and the sap buckets and big kettles were there piled up in one corner, and the big brands of wood in the arch looked as though they had but just gone out. I had never seen maple sugar made, and we all sat down in the little cabin to rest, while aunt Amy very kindly explained the process to me. She said that in March, and sometimes as early as February, if the weather was fine, uncle made a quantity of "spiles," and tapped his trees; and when the sap began to run nicely through the spiles into pails, he built up a roaring fire in the arch, and filled the big cauldron with the sap. Then he kept a steady fire until it was boiled down to a kind of thin molasses or syrup, when it was strained off and put away to settle. After this the sugar making was very easy. They had only to put the syrup in a nice clean kettle, and boil it gently a little while, and when it was thick enough to "grain," it was done, and they sometimes poured it into pans or moulds to harden into cakes.

I thanked aunt Amy for the pains she had taken to please and instruct me, and could not help expressing a wish that I had been there in sugar-time, so that I could have seen the pro-

cess and eaten some of the warm sugar. By this time Fanny and George had built a fire; and when I asked what it was for, aunt Amy said she had brought some sugar with her to melt over, so that we could have some to eat.

This was an unexpected kindness, and I was very grateful to aunt for her forethought. While she was busy round the kettle, she said we would have time for a little play before the sugar was ready to eat; and away we scampered, making the woods ring with our wild shouts and merry laughter. We gathered whole handfuls of the sweet blue violets and little rose-colored anemones, and then we came to the little brook, where were ever so many bluebells in bloom on the other side.

"Oh, how I wish we had some of them. Is n't there any way we can get at them?" I exclaimed.

"There used to be a bridge," replied Fanny, "but it was washed away in the big freshet this spring; and now there is no way to cross except on the large log which you see just down there by the whitewood-tree. Papa goes over on it quite often, and it is safe, I suppose, so I will go over and get you some of the bluebells."

"Oh, let me go with you," said I; "it will be such fun to walk over the water on a log."

"But you might fall in," said Fanny, "and that would n't be very funny, would it? No, I think you had better stay here, and I will get you the flowers."

Fanny spoke very sweetly, but I was angry that she should oppose me, and said haughtily, "I'd like to know what right you have to tell me what I had better do. I can walk over a log as well as anybody," and I started along towards the big whitewood log. Fanny looked troubled, and taking hold of my arm, said earnestly, "Oh do n't, cousin Mary; please do n't; I'm so afraid you will fall."

"But I a'n't afraid," exclaimed I, and rudely pulling my arm away, I stepped upon the log. I looked back; Fanny's eyes were full of tears, and I half repented; but self-will triumphed, and I walked forward.

"Be very careful how you step," said Fanny. "Keep your eyes on the log, but do n't look at the water, and when you are safely over I will come to you."

"Oh, I'm not afraid; there is no danger," said I, confidently; and to show my independence, I leaned to one side and looked down

into the little brook. The sun shining upon the water dazzled my eyes ; I felt sick and dizzy for a moment, then tottered and fell. I heard Fanny's cry of terror, thought of my mother, and struggled to save myself ; but the cold water closed over me, and a dead weight seemed dragging me down. I was fully conscious of my danger, and tried to pray ; then a feeling like that of sleep came over me, and I remember no more.

Fanny told me afterwards that as soon as I fell she ran for help, and in a few moments mother and aunt Amy came to my rescue. The water where I fell was not very deep, and wading in, mother succeeded in reaching me, and aunt Amy helped carry me to the bank, where they tried every means in their power to restore me to consciousness. At first it seemed as though they would never succeed. I lay so white and still, they feared I was really dead ; but after a while I began to show signs of returning life.

The first thing I remember, I was icy cold and in great pain ; then I felt warm tears raining over my face, and heard my mother's voice, tremulous with emotion, blessing God because he had spared the life of her child. Then aunt

Amy's sweet voice murmured, "Poor thing ; poor little thing, I fear it will be the death of her ;" and Fanny, sobbing as though her heart would break, put her arms round my neck, and begged me to open my eyes and speak to her once more. I tried to look up and to speak, but my eyelids seemed borne down by leaden weights ; and though I could move my lips a little, my tongue refused to obey my will, and I uttered not a sound.

Though in great pain, I heard every word that was said, and understood every thing that was passing around me. I knew when they sent Fanny for uncle Stephen, and felt grateful as I heard the quick patter of her feet die away in the distance. I wondered how long it would take him to come ; and it seemed like an age while I lay there, with mother and aunt Amy chafing my benumbed limbs and talking in low tones over me, till at length I heard uncle Stephen's voice. He lifted me in his strong arms, and immediately set out for home, followed by the others, and scarcely another word was spoken until we reached the house. They carried me up to Fanny's room, wrapped me in warm flannel sheets, and put me to bed. Oh, how carefully and tenderly my mother did

every thing she could think of for my restoration, and how often she laid her cheek lovingly to mine to see if it was getting warm. And when the doctor came, how eagerly she questioned him about me. Never till then had I understood how well she loved me ; and as I lay there in my pain and helplessness, I firmly resolved, if I ever got well, I would show my gratitude by being more obedient and affectionate than I had ever yet been to her.

I was in much pain that night ; and it increased my suffering when I reflected that I had brought it all upon myself by my ill-humor and self-will. Then what cousin Fanny had said to me about self-control came fresh to my mind, and I felt very unhappy. Oh, if I had only yielded to her gentle entreaties, or gone back when the still small voice in my heart bade me to do so. I felt that it was the voice of God. But regrets were useless ; I had only to improve upon my sad experience ; and I comforted myself by resolving over and again how, under all circumstances in future time, I would heed the monitions of the Holy Spirit, and practise a Christian self-control.

CHAPTER V.

NEXT day I was better, but still too weak and ill to sit up. Aunt Amy took care of me, for mamma's fright, anxiety, and watching had given her such a headache that she was confined to her room. She read to me, and sang some beautiful verses ; and when I asked her to tell me a story, she readily consented, and drawing her chair near the bed, she began a new seam and her story at the same time.

"When I was a little girl, as long ago as I can remember, I was very quick-tempered."

"You quick-tempered ?" said I, looking in surprise upon her placid brow.

"Yes," replied she with a quiet smile, "and I used to make myself and my friends very unhappy by my self-will. I wanted to have my own way at all times, and often disobeyed my kind mother for the sake of gratifying my selfish desires. In this way I lived until I was about your age. Then I began to think seriously of the course I was pursuing. I knew if I continued thus, I should always render my friends unhappy and my own existence miser-

able, and I resolved to reform. So one morning I made a great many solemn promises about what I would and would not do through the day, and went down stairs feeling quite happy. But as you know perhaps from experience, it is much easier to make good resolves than to keep them."

I thought of the day before, and sighed, but said nothing, and aunt Amy went on.

"I made a little struggle against my evil propensity, then gave up in despair ; and when I went to bed that night, all my good resolutions were broken, and I cried myself to sleep. But my tears were more of vexation than of penitence. I felt provoked at myself for the ease with which I had given up to my besetting sin, and resolved that on the morrow I would make more strenuous efforts at self-control. The next day came and passed as the day before. Thus a week went by. Each morning I made promises ; each day they were broken ; and I all the time was very miserable. Then I thought of a new plan by which I hoped to achieve the end I so much desired. I would write my good resolutions down in the form of a pledge, and see if I could not do better. I did so, but it proved not much better

than the old way ; and I kept on fretting, finding fault, and getting into a passion every time the wishes of another came in conflict with my own. Do you know the reason, my dear niece ?"

" I can't tell, I am sure," said I, " only it seems very hard to practise self-control and be amiable when things don't go right."

" That is very true," said aunt Amy, kindly. " It *is* hard work when people try to overcome evil habits by their *own strength*, and they are always sure of a failure."

" Then it's of no use to try ; for who can be good ?" asked I, sadly.

" Everybody," replied aunt Amy ; " but no one of himself. There is much in our nature at war with purity and truth ; and it is only when the heart is changed by divine grace, and we are content to give up all into the hands of Christ, that we become truly good."

" I have tried to be good and failed," I said.

" Did you ask the Saviour to help you ?" inquired my aunt, looking tenderly upon me.

I thought of the hasty petitions I had offered the morning before, and answered, " Not very earnestly, I am afraid."

" And that is why you failed, my dear niece. Prayer is not *prayer* unless it is sincere ; and

no petition is acceptable to the Lord unless it comes from the *heart*. But to my story After I had tried the pledge for a while I gave up in despair, and went on in the old way. Thus several months passed, when one Sabbath I went to church as usual. Our good minister took for his text, "He that ruleth his own spirit is better than he that taketh a city." If the good man had had special reference to me, he could not have preached a sermon better adapted to my case. I saw clearly where my error had been: I had tried to rule my spirit in my own strength, instead of trusting in the Saviour for help, and taking his word and Spirit for my guide. When I got home, I went to my own little room and prayed earnestly to be forgiven and to be born again; but a thick veil seemed to shut the light of God's countenance from me, and my heart was full of darkness and despair. I could not remember a single thing I had ever done which would entitle me in any way to the love of God; and I knew that I was utterly unworthy of the blessings I daily received from his bountiful hand. Oh, how self-condemned and wretched I was. But when I cried, 'God be merciful to me a sinner,' as I hope with sincere penitence and faith, my

prayer was heard, and the Comforter came. A peace which none know but those who feel it, came into my soul. Then I hope I realized what was meant by a *new heart*. My one prevailing wish was that in all things I might do the will of my Redeemer. Since I learned thus to rely upon Christ, I find less difficulty in ruling my own spirit. It is a pleasure to me to yield my own preferences for the benefit of others. The love of Christ inclines me to live more for my friends than for myself, and I am always happiest when trying to do good in his name."

Aunt Amy had finished her seam and her story ; and without making any remarks upon what she had said, she rose and kissed me, saying kindly, " Now you had better try to sleep, my dear, and I will send Fanny to sit with you while I go and attend to the dinner."

So she went out, and Fanny came and took her watchful station beside me. I closed my eyes, and turned my face towards the wall, but could not sleep, for I kept thinking over aunt Amy's story. There seemed to be a great similarity between her case and mine, and I resolved to try the same means, and see if peace would not come to my troubled spirit.

The Saviour, I trust, heard my cry to him

for mercy. I felt that my sins were forgiven. And now, when wrong desires and passions arise in my mind, I go away by myself and pray for strength to subdue them, and God helps me to do so.

It was several days before I entirely recovered from my “aquatic excursion,” as Fanny laughingly called it ; and when we went back to the city, I felt that my visit to the country had been very beneficial to me morally, if not physically, for there I had learned the great lesson of Christian self-control.

Will not some of my dear little readers profit by the story I have told them ? Is there not some one among you who is weary and disheartened with trying to be good in his own strength, who feels the need of a Saviour’s love and aid, and is willing to give up all, that he may inherit eternal life ? Oh then, come now to the feet of Jesus. He will wash away all the stains that sin has made, and give you a new heart, so that you may live with him in peace on earth, and when death comes, dwell for ever with him in heaven.







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